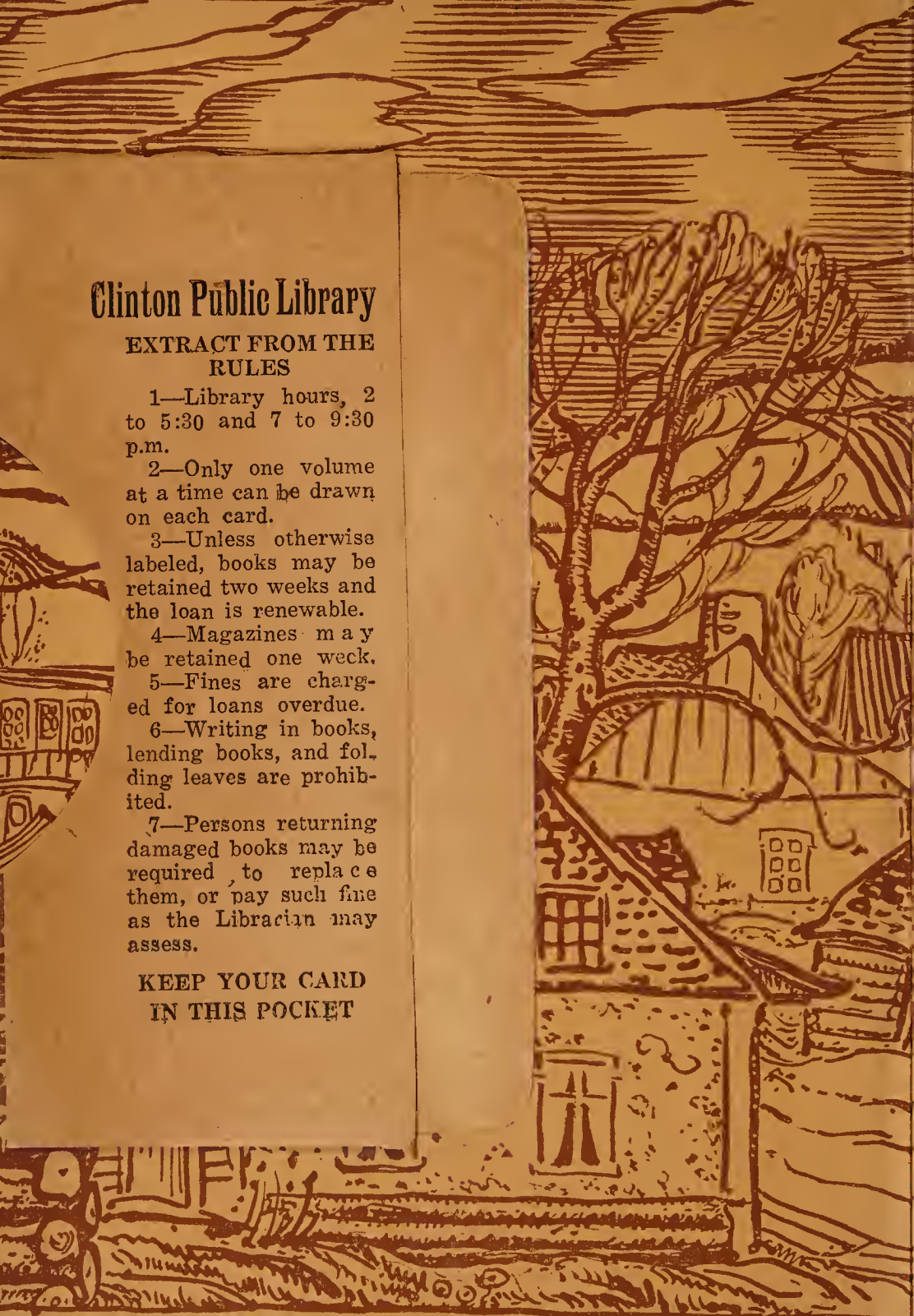
CHEZ NOUS

by ADJUTOR RIVARD

Translated by W. H. Blake



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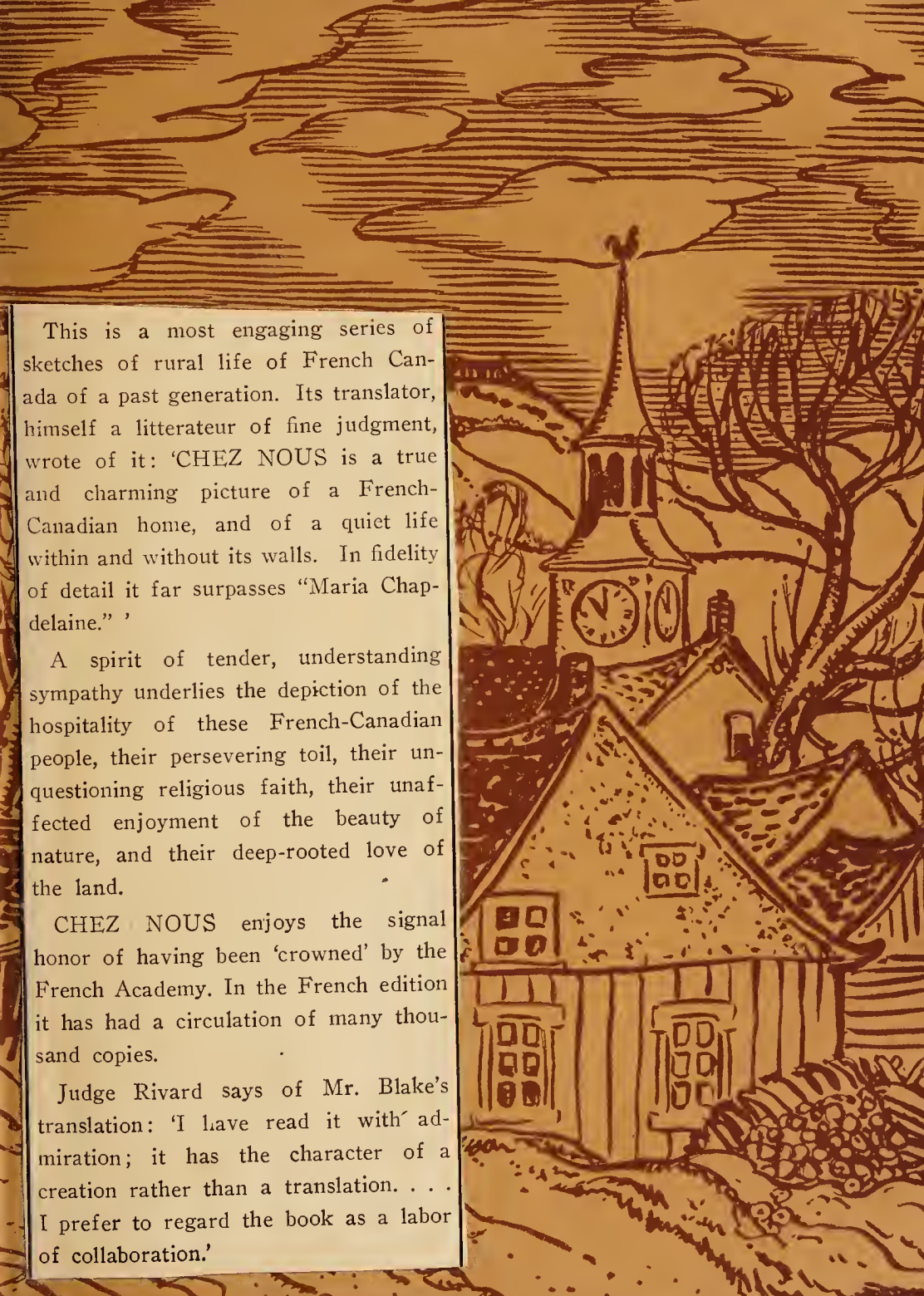


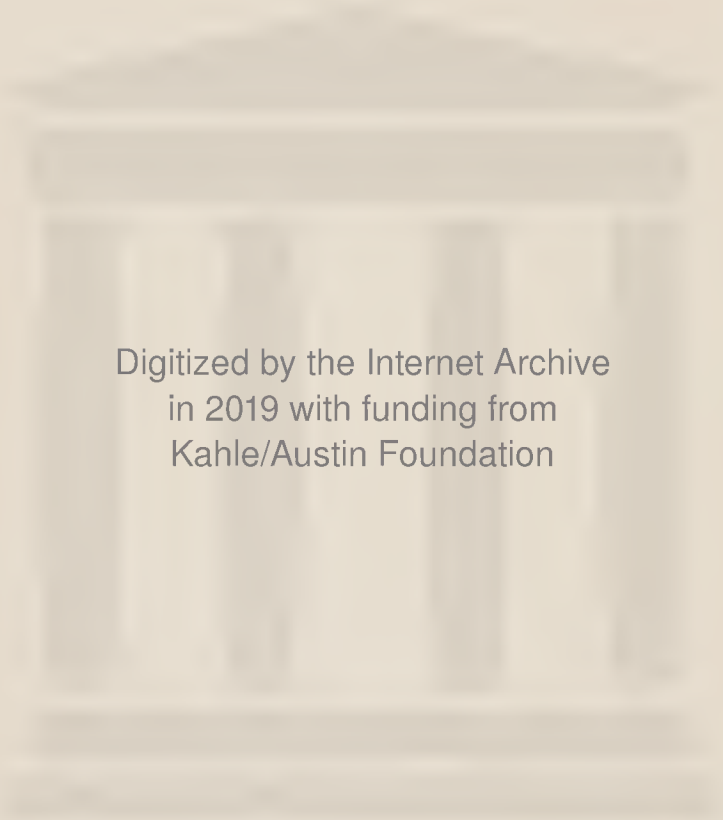
This is a most engaging series of sketches of rural life of French Canada of a past generation. Its translator, himself a litterateur of fine judgment, wrote of it: 'CHEZ NOUS is a true and charming picture of a French-Canadian home, and of a quiet life within and without its walls. In fidelity of detail it far surpasses "Maria Chapdelaine." '

A spirit of tender, understanding sympathy underlies the depiction of the hospitality of these French-Canadian people, their persevering toil, their unquestioning religious faith, their unaffected enjoyment of the beauty of nature, and their deep-rooted love of the land.

CHEZ NOUS enjoys the signal honor of having been 'crowned' by the French Academy. In the French edition it has had a circulation of many thousand copies.

Judge Rivard says of Mr. Blake's translation: 'I have read it with admiration; it has the character of a creation rather than a translation. . . . I prefer to regard the book as a labor of collaboration.'

URS · LES · DIZ · E · LES · FAIZ · E · MURS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CHEZ NOUS

(Our Old Quebec Home)

. . . this house where our folks lived, standing white in the sunlight on the King's highway.

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By

ADJUTOR RIVARD

Translated by

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TO MY CHILDREN
ANTOINE AND GEORGINE

These faithful pages, unadorned save by the words of our old speech, were written that you might the better hold in mind and cherish the ancient memories.

May they deepen in your hearts the love you already feel towards the people and the things of Our Home.

ADJUTOR RIVARD.

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

A TRANSLATOR'S perplexities begin with the title; for *Chez Nous,* like 'home,' is without near equivalent in the opposite tongue;—possibly the colloquial *'our* place' would be the closest rendering. But they do not end with it, for words and phrases of the old dialect (or dialects), smacking of the soil, multiply on Judge Rivard's page, and to suggest their raciness and vigour is next to a hopeless task.

Taking the reader into confidence, I invite him to English *il laboure une beauté mieux que les autres et prend plus de mie,* or *la bordée de ce soir a presque abrié les balises,* or *c'est matin pour les lièvres,* or *le brayeur émouchait sa poignée,* or *il n'y avait pas une jeunesse pour t'accoter;* if a doctor, he might outline the appropriate

treatment for *les auripiaux, les reculons, les déteurses, les tours de reins, les échauffaisons, les efforts, les mordures, les verrures, les grenouilles, les tours d'ongles;* and advise whether the surgical arm should be invoked in the case of one who has been unhappy enough *se décrocher la palette de l'estomac!*

A great deal is necessarily lost in every process of stripping ideas to the buff and re-clothing them in a foreign dress, but here more than usual. Moved by such a thought, did not a great modern translator thus lay down the canons of his art: 'Fear God, honour the King—*and don't translate!*'

Some may be willing to halt for a moment's enquiry as to the idiom which the author uses so freely and tellingly—what it is and whence it came.

The immigrants of the XVII century, deriving from more than a dozen parts of France—in the west, the north-west and the north—brought with them their several peasant dialects. These have never com-

pletely merged, and the peculiarities surviving to-day serve to identify the places of their origin. Words used in one district or settlement are unknown elsewhere in Quebec, and others bear different meanings in different localities. Between the North and the South Shores there is a cleavage which the ear can easily detect. But the uniformity is substantial enough to make a speaker intelligible everywhere.

A fact less well known is that the various dialects spoken in France at the time of the emigration are not there wholly extinct. A young Parisian who had lived much with the peasants and sailors of Normandy did not find himself staggered by the words and the phrases of the North Shore which are often treated with discredit as local *patois*: conversely, he was unable to puzzle us of Charlevoix with his farming and seafaring terms.

The more lettered the Frenchman—in a wide sense—the less of difficulty he encounters in Quebec. But if he command only the French of the Boulevards he will meet

at least initial obstacles of language, intonation and pronunciation.

Let it be well understood that these brief remarks relate to the tongue of the people —whereof comparative illiteracy has been long a sure preservative—and in no wise to the speech of the cultured.

Summing up the question in a broad way, and not too inaccurately, the French-Canadian in the main talks sound French. For the rest I take leave to quote from Judge Rivard's *Etudes sur les Parlers de France au Canada*: 'French-Canadian is a regional speech, relatively but not entirely uniform, and preserving traces of divers *patois* elements which belonged to the language of the common people in parts of the north of France. To which it must be added that, like every transplanted language, it has preserved a form archaic in comparison with that of the mother country, and has borrowed from foreign tongues with which it has been brought in contact.'

In *Maria Chapdelaine,* Louis Hemon

little more than hinted at the vernacular: Judge Rivard has made it a labour of love to seek out and embody in his graceful prose those forceful old words which ring so musically and 'mean just what they say.'

A pity, indeed, that they are less and less frequently heard on the lips of the rising generation—levelling downwards to a dull indistinction beneath the Procrustean hand of 'education!'

Chez Nous was crowned by the French Academy in 1920, and is far more widely known in Quebec than any English-Canadian book giving an account of life in Ontario.

If the graces of its style disappear in this alien garb, something of the intimacy and fidelity of its portraiture may survive; and those who love our country and our countrymen will find reward in the reading.

How many of our petty differences rest in sheer incomprehension, and vanish upon that closer acquaintance which it is at once a pleasure and a duty to cultivate!

There is no surer guide-book to the ways

and manners of Quebec than *Chez Nous,* for the author delves beneath the surface and lays bare to us the generous and kindly French-Canadian heart.

W. H. BLAKE.

CHEZ NOUS

THE HOUSE

OTHERS may have been larger, but surely none held a more welcoming aspect. The door, thrown wide to admit the sun's earliest ray and the scent of the clover and standing open till the fall of night, the windows smiling with flowers, the easy steps, all proffered invitation. When your eye fell upon it from afar the house beckoned, and on nearer approach the summons was so imperative that you must enter. Crossing the threshold you were instantly at home.—'Friend, sit a while and rest.' Should work be doing —and there it never ceased—a moment was spared for greeting. Were you thirsty, behold the bench with its pails of water and the shining dipper always at hand. Should the table be set you were bidden, and the finest of the flowered plates was heaped with the best portion. If you arrived as darkness was falling and yet had far to go, the guest-chamber was yours—

the largest room with the most comfortable bed. Who then would not be minded to drop in on the family, were it only to borrow an opinion from the elders as to next day's weather? Doubtful and ill-disposed persons alone slipped by on the far side of the road with hastened step.

Perhaps other houses made a braver show, but not one was pleasanter for the eye to rest upon. Its four stout walls, solidly laid, soundly knit, gave an air of secure repose. The stones were old, but every spring they donned a new dress of whitewash, and the whole parish could not boast a house more shining white. How the green shutters stood forth in happy contrast with the dull warm background! A native creeper found holding for its tendrils in the rough masonry, climbed the front to the overhanging roof and ran beneath it to the gable where its leaves aspired boldly to the sky. The satisfied glance passed upward to the expanse of tarred shingles framed in white, the

Its four stout walls . . . gave an air of secure repose.

pointed dormer windows and the chimney of broad flat stones. A pipe carried the sweet and treasured rain-water to a hogshead at the corner. The yard in front was strewn with fine sand, and there was place in it for a bench, two lilac bushes and a few lime-washed boulders. Neat and clean and tidy it was, with everything in keeping. . . . I close my eyes and again behold this house where our folks lived, standing white in the sunlight upon the king's highway.

Some houses were louder in their mirth, but in none a deeper happiness reigned. Never a hymn nor a song but they knew it there, and they sang them all finely, with the prettiest twists and turns you could wish to hear. Not that life was easier for our people than for their neighbours; they too must toil and save to make ends meet, and the proof was to see in feet that trod more heavily with the passing years, in foreheads more deeply lined. Strong of spirit were these forbears of ours, and mis-

fortune had no power to disturb their peace. For well they knew this life is naught, and, enduring the sadnesses of it with unshaken trust, reconciled alike with earth and heaven, their days slipped gently on towards the Great Hope. In the morning, at noon, and again at evening our people were wont to pray together; and by reason of their praying work seemed lighter, burdens less heavy, griefs the quicker healed. So it was that after each bereavement joy came stealing back into the house as a bird homes to her nest.

How good it was to live with our people! In an instant, as by miracle, you found yourself delivered from every care, remote from all harassment, sheltered from every worry. No evil thing could harbour under this roof whereon a blessing rested. The days passed in happy tranquillity, and peace entered the soul. One's self was better.

And how good it were to come back at the last to this old roof to die!

THE BEST ROOM

THE best room is to the right as you enter. Shut windows and closed door preserve within it a savour of ancient things. The daylight, tempered by green paper blinds, dies softly into shadow. Two strips of rag-carpet run from end to end across the painted floor. Upon the old mahogany table, cherished as a family heirloom and occupying the centre of the room, lie missals bound in leather, prizes won at the village school, tin-types in their hinged frames, an album and sundry keepsakes. The chairs, arm-chair and sofa, ranged along the walls, are covered with black horse-hair. A grandfather's clock, the face yellow with age, stands in one corner. It is not ticking: no one has wound it since the day when an itinerant clock-mender found a wheel too many in the works. On the walls hang a crucifix, some family portraits and a

sampler worked on canvas:—'God guard us.' Such is the best room.

Seldom does it open, and you enter reverently, as into a place of worship.

Only on momentous occasions does one cross the threshold: to honour a visitor, to make merry at the birth of a son, to pray beside the dead.

Not for the ordinary caller does the best room open its door. Relatives and friends are accounted of the family, almost of the household. They know the occupants well enough to unharness the horse and put him in the stable, to walk boldly in and establish themselves; feeling almost beneath their own roof-tree. The best room is not for such as these.

Receiving a visitor is quite another affair. Maybe a lady of one's acquaintance arrives from town, or a priest, a friend of the family—someone beyond the common. He is expected, all is ready to give him welcome, and the door that stays shut for others opens to him.

But the visit of most consequence, on which they set the greatest store, and honoured with Sunday raiment, is that of Monsieur le Curé.

All morning the children have been on the watch, and now they catch sight of his equipage at the turning of the road.

The churchwarden in charge is driving him in a light sleigh behind a frisky horse, and the harness is new, with rosettes at the bridle and silver mountings on the saddle. From house to house they go, in accordance with notice given from the pulpit, stopping everywhere. Back in the concessions the houses are scattered, and the distance from one to another is covered at a rattling pace. The snow sings beneath the runners, the sleigh-bells chime. Warm under the robes notwithstanding the pinching cold, Monsieur le Curé is off through the brilliant winter sunshine sparkling on the white fields to visit his parishioners. Now he is leaving the neighbour's house. Come! churchwarden, crack your whip, swing in

to the rise before our house without slackening speed and draw up handsomely before the stone steps. Everything is prepared; the best room stands open.

'Pray enter, Monsieur le Curé, and bestow on us your blessing.'

Forthwith they kneel; and the *curé* utters his protecting words over the bowed heads.

They all stream after him into the best room where he reckons up his flock, enquires as to the needs of each one, receives their confidences and quiets their fears, gives the needed counsel, sympathy, cheer and consolation. He recalls, too, the absent faces, revives old memories of those who are gone, fortifies hopes. . . .

Before departing, the churchwarden does not fail to mention that, as the custom is, a sleigh follows the *curé's* carriole. The hint is not needed, for well they remember that the collection named for the Infant Jesus is made at the same time as the parochial visit, and they are in readiness.

'Here is a pumpkin and a string of

onions, church warden, and, if you can find a corner for them, take this brace of hares.'

And the best room is closed.

For baptisms, as well, the best room opens.

A son is born! The first maybe, or the tenth, or the eighteenth. . . . And the more the merrier. They will add a plank to the table; and next year, beyond shadow of doubt, the land will better its yield.

A son is born! What a to-do all in a moment: the god-mother is to seek and the godfather; the new baby has to be bundled up and the whole party drives off to the village. Heads are thrust out of the windows as they pass: 'If that is not Benjamin baptising again! Soon he will be having the whole parish in his house!'

A son is born! And now the holy water has touched his forehead. Ring out, ye bells! For a Christian he returns. The godfather was open-handed, wherefor ring loud and fast! Tune your notes in happy

accord! Let the news be known far and wide: a Christian is born!

And do you every one—godfather, godmother, kinsmen, friends and friends' kin, neighbours and passers-by come in and see the mother and the child! The table is spread; the door of the best room stands wide.

All brightness and joy, the best room opens for the feast of the new-born.

Grave and sad, it opens too for the mourning of the dead. Full of years, how many have lain there in a last repose. On the day of baptism they first crossed the portal in the fulness of new life; still and cold, they return for the last time on the evening of their death. And from the best room each one at length makes his final departure. You may see their portraits upon the wall, but no longer are they of our time.

When their descendant, the ploughman of to-day, has bound all his sheaves and housed his last load of hay he will make

settlement with earth and heaven as did his fathers, and, like them, his hour will come. Clad as for Sunday, they will lay him beneath the Christ in the best room, a candle on either hand.

Kindred and friends will come to bid him farewell and to pray for his soul. The neighbours will gather at close of day to repeat their evening prayer in company with the dead. For three days and three nights they will watch beside him, till comes the moment of the lifting and the last journey.

. . .

And again the best room will shut, fuller yet of memories.

THE CRADLE

FOUR goodly planks of sound wood, stoutly joined, make the body of the cradle. The corner posts which support the frame are carved at the top in the likeness of a bulrush, and the same rustic skill has given the head-piece an outline of sober grace. The rockers are without a knot and are curved so that the cradle swings easy and smooth as a boat upon the wave.

You have but to fit the bottom board into the notches; to add a tiny mattress and a pillow; furnish sheets, blankets and quilt; on a half-hoop at the head to stretch the awning which shields young eyes from too strong a light; and, let him rock who will, you may be sure that the little lad within will sleep there soundly with closed fists.

The cradle is very old; generations have

been rocked in it. In a manner of speaking I could say that our cradle was there from the beginning, for, so many years has it seen, its age is known to none. It was in the house before the chairs with seats of interlaced horse-hide,—before the dumpy stove which took over the duties of the open fire-place,—before the red kneading-trough that one always remembers in the north-east corner,—before the great blue chest where coverlets have been stored so far back as anyone can recollect. One might risk it that the cradle saw the very house built, room by room, and lay attending the shelter of a roof, for events were just on the edge of need for its services. In truth this bit of furniture is as old as the family itself.

By honoured tradition the cradle passes from generation to generation, a precious family possession; and it is the born right of the eldest married daughter to fetch it from her father's roof when she awaits the first visit of the stork. Thus from mother to daughter has the old cradle, affectionate-

The little lad within will sleep there soundly . . .

ly known as the 'blue-box,' descended to us.

And who fashioned it in the far-away past? I like to think of the rugged forefather who brought these four planks together and made of them the cradle of his race, and I seem to see him, remote, standing on the very confines of history.

The colonist has hewn for himself a home in the forest. In the middle of the clearing he has built the house which harbours his love, his joy, his dearest hopes. On the sill of their log-cabin stands his helpmate, and follows her man with her eyes as he departs, ax on shoulder, singing as he goes. The foot-path takes a winding way through the charred stumps, and the sun blazes down on him.

As yet the encircling woods are close at hand, and soon he halts before a lofty maple whose sturdy shaft towers high above the lower growth. With a keen glance he measures the great tree as though pitting himself against it. A sign of the

cross, and firmly he plants his feet, the strong back bent, the muscles taut. His good blade swings, burying itself in the green wood; again, and the first chip flies.

'Ahoy there Nicolas! What are you about? This is no time to be clearing your land!'

'True enough. When the season for that comes round the untouched forest shall feel my ax; just now this maple will answer. I chose it from a thousand because it is the strongest. From a thousand I chose it because it is the straightest. See how rough the bark, how sound the heart!' The steel sinks again and again into the living wood and the chips dance in air.

'Months ago was it that I marked this tree. One evening, the day's work done, at the hour when the fields are misty beneath the setting sun, my young wife sitting by me told of her hope. With bared head I answered "Now God be praised!" And from the threshold of our cabin I showed her this maple at the edge of the wood, taller than its fellows:— "That is

the very one I shall fell for the cradle." '
Swifter the blows, and thicker fly the chips.

'And now has come the hour when the tree must fall, for the time is not distant when a cradle will be wanted in my house. A few more days of waiting and you shall see me driving to the village, happy as any prince, and you shall hear the bells ring for the christening. Joy will abound under my roof, and neighbours will be welcome to come through the forest to see the woodman's son, for the table will not be bare.' And yet more keenly bites the steel, till the chips rain through the air and strew and whiten the ground.

The wood-cutter smites with all the strength of his rejoicing thews; his ax is at the tree's heart, and still it falls, swings, falls again in the broadening deepening cut. Another blow, and the top shivers against the sky. For the last time the steel flashes . . . the old king bows himself over the wound, hangs thus for an instant, shudders to his uttermost twig, and with a long groan comes crashing to earth.

A good job done! Now, Nicolas, strip the mighty trunk. Let the neighbours lend a hand. Here! you Johnny Baptistes, stoutly ply the two-handed saw; square the timber skilfully with the shining broad-ax; and now, you sawyers, cut me up this master-block. Fine planks they are, and truly sawn! Be at them, Nicolas, with hand-saw, auger and plane. Dovetail the ends and drill the holes straight. Carve bulrushes on the post heads with your knife. Now, put all together. Here are the pegs, made to fit snugly. Work away with chisel, draw-knife and mallet!

The expected baby may arrive when it likes and the holy water may flow and the christening-bells ring, for here is the cradle ready!

From mother to daughter the cradle has come down to us—the cradle of our fore-fathers, made of clean straight-grained maple.

In the course of a long life the cradle has known many vicissitudes. The pretty

slate-blue has dulled to gray. Hard wear has rounded the corners and made the bulrush heads shiny, and the touch of many a patient foot has worn away the points of the rockers. A story of knocks and bangs and bruises and scorchings is written in the scars it bears.

One night the lightning struck and set the house on fire; first the baby was saved, then the cradle. The flames were licking the head-board and the blister is there to see.

In a spring freshet the river overflowed its banks and the water rose above the floors; people got away as best they could —through the window in the gable, by canoe; the unhappy cradle battled about for days in the flood.

Many a wound is there of which I do not know the history, but the cradle was built to withstand life's onslaughts and is sound as ever and rocks as smoothly.

When the cradle is not in use it reposes on a beam in the attic; at the coming of a

baby they carry it down again. But the flaxen heads follow so fast that it is scarcely worth while from year's end to year's end to stow it away—so unfailing the demand for its good offices. Nor is there happier sound in the house than the constant rocking, and the lullabies which keep time to it.

C'est la poulette grise
Qu'a pondu dans l'église . . .

The mother herself it may be, with another child in her arms, or fingers busy with the knitting, who stirs the cradle with her foot as she sings. Her voice falls lower and lower as drowsiness comes, and trails off to silence when baby falls asleep.

C'est la poulette caille
Qu'a pondu dans la paille . . .

Perhaps the father is there, groping for a softer tone in his hearty voice. His wife is back and forth as she makes the soup; and the ploughman gently swings the tiny cot with the great hand which all day has held the handles of the plough. But the

red-cheeked tot does not want to go to bybys and would rather clutch the beard conveniently in reach of his chubby fist.

C'est la poulette blanche
Qu'a pondu dans la grange . . .

Or the eldest girl, none very old at that, has been allowed the treat of putting baby to sleep. Seated on the foot of the cradle, her voice rings out at the pitch of her lungs as though her task were to waken the whole house; and she rocks with such goodwill as to threaten everything with shipwreck!

C'est la poulette brune
Qu'a pondu dans la lune,
Elle a pond un beau petit coco
Pour l'enfant qui va faire dodo.
Dodiche, dodo!
Dodiche, dodo!

Though grandmamma's voice quavers and fails, her aid is sought on those evenings when little fits of bad temper possess the occupant of the cradle, for no one has quite the old lady's knack with children—so many a one has she rocked in her day!

It is when she is beside the cradle that the

family loves best to draw near. One is so sure of a smile! Heads bend over curiously; the big people have a word of admiration, the little folk of amazement:—'Grandma, it has eyes! Look Grandma, it has a nose!' The small one-before-the-last holds staggeringly to the top of a post and sulks. The tears are not far away, for has she not been turned out of her very own cradle in favour of a little usurping brother! But she is consoled with the promise that she shall have papa's place in the big bed just for to-night.

And when everyone in the house sleeps you might still hear the cradle going;—fastened to mother's wrist by a string it is rocking in the dark.

O God, do Thou bless the houses where the cradle is held in honour! Bless those hearths where many a birth comes to cheer the ancient cradle and bring it perpetual youth! Bless the families who hold in reverence the virtues of former days, to the glory of our Church and of our Country!

THE STOVE

OUR double-decked stove is of solid build and stands low on its feet. The massive sides are cast in a fanciful design where fabulous creatures are seen disporting themselves, their outlines worn to indistinctness. The great fire-box will take a three-foot log of unsplit maple, and in the day when bees were common the oven easily cooked a meal for twenty threshers.

In summer-time, when the sun tans faces and ripens the grain, the stove is idle; yet it holds the accustomed place full in the centre of the kitchen floor, and still makes itself useful as a pantry cupboard.

But no sooner does autumn bring the crisp and chilly days than the stove wakes from sleep; and all winter long its breath curls from the roof into the windless air, or whirls away, torn and ragged, on the

blast. Through the months of cold, now loud, now low, it murmurs an unfailing tune; in those still nights which summon the spirits out to dance across the serene northern sky, the stove's voice is even and regular and reassuring; but when the nor'-easter rages, shrieking as it battles with the leafless trees, the stove roars angry defiance. It shields the dwelling from the fierce cold, and the comforting warmth rises to the dark rafters and spreads to every corner of the house, even to the best room which no one enters except on days of feasting or mourning. It thaws the powdery snow sifting unkindly beneath the door that cannot shut it out, toasts little red toes, warms the good soup to steaming.

The very soul of the house is it. Should the fire die within, and the plume of smoke vanish from the chimney, and the purr of its draught suddenly fall silent, the house would swiftly be lifeless. 'Dead hearths, dead households.' And the Canadian stove is as trusty a custodian of old tradition as ever was the hearth.

The smoke rises . . . white into the windless starlight.

THE STOVE

To him who has skill to light his pipe with a coal and who loves to smoke and meditate by a stove's door, this guardian deity of the place affords as good counsel as the open fire.

Seated in a chimney-corner, one sets forthwith to dreaming, to the building of his castles in the air; and sadly watches them dissolve away with the dying embers, the mounting blue, the perishing spark. In front of your stove door a man must think; his mind runs to things of weightier consequence.

For the stove is serious-minded and full of wisdom, nor has it sympathy with idle unprofitable fancies. The airy visions which the song of the hearth conjures up are displeasing to this sober old fellow, and he stifles all the trivial and frivolous voices which rise from the fire-dogs in a chorus of whistlings and purrings and cracklings, and blends the wayward whimsical medley into a deep solemn drone.

Fearing, likewise, for those he loves, the allurement of dancing sparks, the shifting

show of flames, the phantasies born of their fleeting shapes, he hides from the eyes of men his bed of glowing coals. The labour of the fire accomplishes itself privily in the secret inferno which his sides contain, and only the red eye that stares unwinking through the door tells the radiant martyrdom of the wood chanting a death-song within.

At dusk the neighbours drop in for a pipe; they arrive plastered with snow, and the stove is welcome to their hands stiffened with the cold. When they are grouped about its door, and the light has circled till all the pipes are going, this stove of the habitant likes to be entertained with talk of the land hard-gripped by the autumn frosts, of outbuildings in course of repair, of routine work on the farm and the monotonous labours of winter, of beasts cared for, wheat in barn, the sugar-bush that is to be tapped, the chances of the future crop. 'On Christmas Eve it was almost as bright as day in the hay-mow, and that means a light stand of wheat next

summer . . . Last year the presage was the other way about, and, sure enough, we had a heavy yield to the very fences . . . In the spring we shall hire Pierre the son of Grégoire; he ploughs a sight better than the rest of them and takes more sod . . . We are going to clear to the sou'west of the rocky bit, on the other side of the big burning . . . François' Joseph is off to town tomorrow for advice; he wants to swap horses, for his notion is that the one he had from the dealer is not handy enough . . . The lads snared a couple of hares yesterday; it is pretty early for them yet . . . This evening's snow-fall has nearly hidden the little trees marking the winter road; we shall have to be up to-morrow with the first streak of dawn to break a way through before the roadmaster comes along, for if he takes a fancy to go by early there will surely be a fine to pay . . . He is not over-considerate, is the roadmaster; he puts you to no end of trouble for a trifle of a drift; and there are pitch-holes opposite his own place, too. Just as if when the

good God sends the snow we-folks could hinder it drifting! . . .'

The stove has strict views, but it allows one to amuse one's self. Many a dance has it seen, soberly accompanied many a song, and hearkened to the best fiddlers of the parish. Feet now still have cut pigeon-wings before it in a style the young folks of to-day have clean forgotten. Winter gatherings take place of an evening in the room which the stove inhabits, and the best story-tellers bring out their yarns in turn—striving to show the nimblest wit, and best to carry the point of the joke to the very last word of the tale. The talk that you hear around the stove has nothing in it of the finikin and corrupted speech of the town; it is the plain and forthright tongue of the fathers and every word of it means precisely what it says.

And the stove remembers. It likes to hear the old folks often talked about; they who used to sit there once upon a time, and, pipe withdrawn, to puff the cloud that em-

phasizes a remark, with the same ruddy beam lighting their honest faces. The present master of the house, a son of the line, whose hair begins to whiten at the temples, bears their traits. Even as they, when night has fallen and the neighbours have gone homeward across the snow, will he kneel with wife and children in the cheerful warmth before the old figure of the Christ hanging on the wall; then the stove will not forget to add its familiar voice to the evening prayer.

The youngsters flock to their canopied beds and the lamp is quenched. Yet a little longer there is whispering before the stove in the gloom; the father as he smokes a last pipe and the mother with her beads still in her hands chat in a slow undertone of those things they like to keep just to their two selves, which are not for little ears: of memories and hopes, common to them and intimate, of anxieties which they must share. The wind has died, and out of doors all is still. Sole confidant in what is passing between its master and mistress,

the stove murmurs very softly. Their heads incline to one another as this hour of close and tender converse carries them on into the night . . .

The voices cease and everyone sleeps. Only the stove talks quietly to itself, and a gleam from its half-closed eye plays upon the wall and gives a shadowy life to this and to that. The smoke rises from the roof, white into the windless star-light. The stove is watching over the sleeping house.

CANDLES

DIP here! Dip there!'—'Dip here! Dip there!'

We were making candles;—before moulds came into fashion and changed the way of doing things. A cauldron of tallow stood within reach, and beside it a tub of cold water. The wicks were already cut and twisted, and a heavy nail at the end of each one kept it straight and carried it to the bottom. To get on the faster, four or five of them were knotted to a stick. This was held level, and the wicks sank together into the boiling fat, were at once withdrawn with a thin coating of tallow and plunged into the cold water where it instantly hardened.

'Dip here! Dip there!'—'Dip here! Dip there!'

And so the alternating movement goes

on until the candles are as thick as you wish.

Thus in old days were the dips made which bore the name of 'water-candles.'

Poor water-candles! They were never very even. Rough and misshapen, they had to be smoothed and often straightened. Poor tallow dips! The light was red and smoky and soon lost itself. The bold shadows it had so little strength to dispel scarcely feared it, and crowded in malevolently at the waning of the uncertain flame to smother out its life. But for the snuffers which kept restoring the candle's perishing vitality, darkness would soon have won victory over the unhappy dip. But at least it was a candle, and the only light-giver we knew.

What do we not owe to the water-candle! Dimly it lighted our mothers' unending tasks. By the glimmer, their tired eyes followed the needle plying in the gray homespun through long winter evenings.

Holy water does not spurn it, and from what ills has it not shielded the dwelling! When the angry sky flings its javelins from tumultuous cloud you may see a tiny flame spring up in every house—the flame of a candle blessed on Candlemas Day—to ward off the lightning.

A swift stroke has laid the old peasant on his bed; his end is near. And presently the bells are sounding across the fields as the Sacrament comes to him who never again will take the road to his church. As it crosses the threshold, rests on the simple altar, is received as viaticum, the candle raises a humble flame in prayer.

Nor will it desert him as he lies stretched in death. Faithfully it watches over him in the room draped with black; burning continually for three days and three nights, and dwindling ever as its hot tears flow.

When autumn arrives and the days draw in, the candle presides at the evening meal. It lights the rough faces bent over the

board, plates and pewter spoons reflect its ray; and when the father marks the sign of the cross with his knife above the loaf he is about to cut, the blade throws back its gleam.

At the fall of dusk the candle descends from the chimney-piece where the snuffers bear it company, and in its light the evening passes. The four corners of the kitchen rest in shadow, and scarcely one sees the rafters overhead. If a visitor enters you must march forward with the candle to see who comes. Yet those gathered round the table, hugging the flame, manage to knit and sew, or to read some ancient tale in some ancient book.

Should one have to go out late to water the horses the candle lights the way, discovers the well and the well-sweep, guides to the stable's low door. The flame burns and makes mock of the wind, in the tin lantern pierced with holes.

Since those days have come wax candles and lamps, gas-jets and electric lights; but I hold in tender recollection the happy time when it was 'Dip here! Dip there!' as we made water-candles.

THE GARDEN

IT was by the side of the house, and there was a fence around it because the cows were left to roam in the evening and chew their cuds by the outbuildings. The well of spring water, stone-rimmed and with a well-sweep that stood up like a ship's yard, was within the enclosure. Milk-pails, upside down and dripping, capped the two higher posts by the gate. The last additions to flock and herd were often to be seen gambolling in the frivolous way of youth, on awkward shaky legs, just outside the fence.

The garden was a wonder. Small as it was, no one would have dreamed that it had room for so much. In neat well-cared-for beds we had peas, beans, sugar peas (eaten pods and all), turnips, cabbages, carrots, cucumbers, melons, pumpkins, parsley, radishes, savory, onions, potatoes,

Indian corn, with flowers bordering the walks. At the far end were a row of gooseberry bushes, two plum trees, some cherries and an apple tree yet too young for bearing.

Every vegetable and every fruit deserves a page, but it is of the flowers that I most want to tell. Not so many kinds: only carnations, long-stalked and waving in the breeze; roses (and surely the time of roses did not pass so quickly then as now); snapdragon—when one's fingers squeezed it below, the flower opened its mouth to bite—; hydrangea, whose constant bloom shaded to purple and blue and red and white; long-whorled rosemary; spiky, perfumed rat's tail; heavy-headed peonies; poppies—heaps of poppies; mignonette, that smelt so good; pansies of all the colours in the world. No more than these, but they were enough to give a festive air to the sober vegetable beds.

Just this seemed to be the flowers' mission in life: to clothe the vegetable beds for holiday. The flowers were never gathered

There you can see the earth putting forth all its powers.

to deck table or chimney-piece. Their buds opened, they flourished and died in the garden, and their petals strewed the walks.

The grandfather used to say to his grandchildren as he waited till the sun was low before watering his flowers 'Leave the roses growing. The good God made the earth for His praise, and adorned it that it should fitly praise Him. What is a flower but the earth praying, and what the scent of it but incense? Do not rob the earth, my children, of its beauteous garb and its prayers. Never is a flower so lovely as upon the stem. When you pluck it, see how it fades and dies. How sad and ugly are the withered blooms! But the growing flower does not lose comeliness in death; even in death the perfume lingers. One by one the petals drop; perishing, are they shed, green leaves hide the ruin, and, lo, another bud opens close beside! Little ones, leave the roses on the tree.'

'You should say that to grandmamma' we protest, 'every Saturday she gathers a

whole armful; maybe she does not know it is wrong.'

'Every Saturday your grandmamma gathers a great sheaf of flowers, and arranges them and takes them to the church. That is well, my grandchildren, for the flowers belong to the earth, but both the flowers and the earth are God's. It is right that the flowers should offer sacrifice of themselves for the sake of praying on the altar, and yield their last perfume at the Master's feet. Is it not happy to think that all Sunday long the flowers sprung from the soil I turned are slowly yielding up their lives in the holy place, still breathing the prayer begun in this garden of mine?'

'Then, grandpapa, why not have only flowers in the garden? It would be so much prettier.'

'That would be wrong; for the good God made the world for man as well. He intends that it should nourish me and your grandmamma and your parents and yourselves and all mankind. I have but to dig

it up, your grandmamma has only to plant tiny little seeds, and the kindly earth drinks in the rain, distils mysterious juices and sends them up into the sunlight; obediently doing for me all that I require of it. Should I ask for flowers alone, the earth could charge me with failing in my duty. I would have the peasant's garden bear testimony alike to the earth which gives life and the earth which brings delight, to the earth as it works, and as it prays; the gentle motherly earth whose life-giving sap clothes the white onions in fair robes, swells the hearts of the cabbages, lifts high the tasselled corn, and, beneath one and the same sun, brings the roses into bloom. That is why my garden has both flowers and vegetables. There you can see the earth putting forth all its powers.'

And because there was a drought and the ground was thirsty, grandfather went off to the garden to water his vegetables and his flowers.

OLD IMPLEMENTS

HUNG on wooden pegs or leaning against the wall, the old implements repose in a corner of the shed which no one uses. In dust and darkness they lie there: the big two-handled winnowing-basket, the hay-fork with wooden tines, the flail and sickle and flax-mill, with the short scythe, and, of late years, the cradle.

Uncle Jean, it was, who gathered up these old companions of his toil. The winnowing-basket was at the back of the hay-mow, and Uncle found this relic and gave it shelter before the hay was got in. He rescued the sickle from the garden where it lay rusting. The flail he discovered in the loft, the hay-fork in the stable, the short scythe and the cradle on the rafters of the barn, the flax-mill in the attic of the bake-house. Uncle Jean routed them out from one place and another, and gave them har-

bourage in the shed beyond reach of prying eyes, where they would suffer no indignity. The modest collection of antiquities also embraces a plough-share, a broken spade, a two-horned anvil, spouts to gather sap when the maples are flowing, odds and ends of harness.

These are the tried and trusty friends of the old ploughman, and he comes now and then to look them over, to finger them, to talk to them under his breath. It may be that they mutter to him in their turn.

'What bees we have worked at together!' says the sickle. 'They always gave us the rough edge of the field and we did not dally at the job. You brought no lazy hand to the reaping! Bent well forward in your steady unresting swing, we kept moving on into my sweeping cut. Your left hand grasped a handful of the grain and my blade went whistling through the straw at every stroke. Back you swayed from left to right, and then another sheaf fell; a swift gleam just above the sod and the nod-

ding heads were low. Again! Again! Again! Without halt, my crescent shone through the yellow wheat, and, pausing not, you laid the handfuls in orderly row upon the furrow, while the lengthening carpet stretched golden beneath the sun. And when you straightened up at the field's end with dripping forehead, your outside swath was bare as a board and the other sickles were yet afar—are you mindful of it, old reaper?'

'Very old am I,' whispers the flail, 'nigh as old as you, but there is stout stuff in both of us. Hand-staff of maple, swingle of birch, the wood is sound; only has my middle-band failed. Rust has eaten the iron ring, the leather has perished. Our day is over, for a machine supplants the threshers in the barn. Snorting, griding, thumping, it swallows whole sheaves, furiously chews and chews the straw and spits it out. Ours was a happier and more wholesome task. The unbound sheaves were spread upon the threshing-floor and

sturdy arms swung the flails; the swingles circled overhead, falling and falling in rhythm upon the straw till it gave up its treasure. The kernels danced on the floor and faces were beaded with sweat, but the flails rose and circled and fell unceasingly on the yellow heads. A charge of sheaves yielded a sack of grain, and one threshing followed upon another while songs filled the livelong day—old thresher of the ancient flail, do you remember it all?'

Protests the wooden hay-fork,—'I should like to know wherein the implements of to-day beat us. As for myself, I was a branch from the forest hard by. You it was who went to seek me there one summer evening. You shaped my tines, and in many a year of use your hand brought my wood to polish. Have I ever betrayed you or broken under the weight of your arm—I all in one sound piece? Was there ever sheaf of wheat or truss of hay I could not raise without flinching? Into what hay-mow, however lofty, did I

fail to lift my burden? And what loads—loads the size of a house—we used to pile on the big cart! People did not weigh their hay as now they do; it was an honester world and there was faith in the word of a farmer. "We must give good measure, my children," you would say, and whoever bought a load of hay from us received all he reckoned on and more. How I rode back from the field, erect and proud, stuck in the very top! Are there steel tines now which scatter the hay to the sunshine better than mine did? I was light in the hand, and your wife could use me as well as any man. She has taken on years too, has Melanie; but what a fine figure of a woman she was then; and, for work, who could stand up beside her!—Do you remember, my old haymaker?'

A worn horse-collar takes up the tale: —'Here am I, almost the last bit of wreckage from a harness that saw long service. I knew every horse you led to stable, and the best of them all was Blond. A clever beast she was! Neither too heavy nor too

light, standing well whatever way you looked at her and with good paces. She was handy and biddable, stood quietly, covered the road handsomely, had all the virtues a horse can boast. Poor old Blond! Is her whitened forehead still above ground by the side of the boundary ditch? There was another that went by the name of Caribou; with that beast in the shafts it was another story! All the vices, if you will, but legs of steel. Not everyone was able to harness Caribou; indeed you alone could manage. But to see us fly through the village when you held the reins—a cloud of dust! Caribou went in exchange for Grise and something to boot, for Grise was then no more than a filly. A fine mare, she, and no bad tricks; a child could drive her. Without so much as a word, Grise went her way like a human being; never touching a gate-post, passing other vehicles all by herself, pulling clean and cleverly into the threshing-floor. And the strength and staying power she had! There was not her equal in a heavy cart,

and what a fine deep straight furrow she made when she drew the plough.—My ancient ploughman, do you hold these things in mind?'

The broad winnowing-basket that Uncle Jean once handled so lightly with the aid of his knee, has its word:—'Hard by the door of the barn I tossed and swung; you saw the leaping grain, the dust floating off on the breeze, the chaff working out to the edge of my disk. There is no denying it was heavy work, but then, God be thanked, the men were built for such. While to-day—alas!'

The flax-mill recounts its old-time labours:—telling how the flax was plucked, laid in loose bundles on the furrow, bound into sheaves, beaten by the flail and left to weather in the sun and the dew. It recalls the place on the edge of the wood where a slow fire was kindled in a pit, of the stage whereon the flax was spread to dry, of the assembled helpers ranged in half circle. As the beaters keep falling, the sheath separ-

ates from the fibre, the worker picks up his handful and frees it from the rubbish, heckles, combs and plaits it. Now you have the twists of good linen fibre on the one side, on the other the tow, while the ground is littered with the refuse—all of which things the old flax-mill with worn jaws duly recites.

The short scythe and the cradle have some consolations to exchange, for yet there is need of them both on occasion. While horse-reapers and rakes do their work in the centre of the fields, what would open the way for these were the cradle not at hand? And amid the stumps of a fresh clearing, how would the first crop of hay be gathered but for the short scythe? Alas though, the young folks have never learned the trick of using them, and the yet steady hand of Uncle Jean is in requisition for a clean job.

The anvil, the spade, the spouts for sap, —each of them has something for the ear of Uncle Jean. When presently he leaves

the old implements to their rest and turns back to the house, you could swear his kindly face is lit by a smile of other days!

THE BROOK

A BROOK divided the next farm from ours. Flowing from its source in the wood, this neighbourly stream meandered through bushes up to the boundary-line, whereupon it ran due south. After receiving tribute from the ditches on either hand it passed near the house, trended to the east, leaving the ruins of the old mill on our side, and then turned abruptly to cross the king's highway on a slant under the bridge.

No brook was it, but a veritable river. In the memories of children who played beside it this is beyond all dispute.

When they called to us from the house that the time was come to go and fetch the cows, we had to clutch roots and branches to aid us in scrambling up the steep bank. An enormous boulder rested near, which only the biggest were able to climb, and they reported an amazing view from the

top. From the mill, up-stream, the water flowed swift and clear over pebbles; down-stream it broadened to a lake just before passing under the bridge.

Fish swam in our river: small and very lively fish that played about in schools, and big ones of calmer temperament that lay in the shadow of the bridge. One saw them plainly through the translucent water:— heads to the current and their delicate fins stirring.

Ships sailed our river; now working upward with the aid of a tow-line, now driving with the stream or plying from landing-place to landing-place. Row-boats, they were, and schooners and three-masters; and it was a simple matter to tell them apart. The row-boats were chips of any shape you pleased, without keel or tackle; and their construction allowed them to voyage stern-foremost, bow first, anyway—a very useful ability in the mariners' estimation. The schooners were likewise flat-bottomed, but a pocket-knife

Fish swam in our river . . . One saw them plainly through the translucent water.

had shaped them with greater art out of cedar shingles. Their pointed bows and rounded sterns showed them designed for speed, and they carried two masts with paper sails. The three-masters were of a more elaborate model. The hulls of the best of them were old wooden shoes, suitably rigged; but the bottom of a cask gave you a fine ship too, and very seaworthy withal. Whatever their origin and whatever their lines, you recognized them at a glance by the three masts and the powerful build. One may guess that the three-masters, freighters subject to a serious marine risk, could only voyage with safety in the deeper waters—of the lake near the bridge, for instance. Forever taking ground or striking a rock, they were unsuited to river navigation.

Could you have seen our schooners descending the river and running the rapid! As you may well believe, this did not always happen without mishap, for a badly trimmed schooner was in peril of capsizing with its cargo, or a row-boat out of its

course might be there to block the channel. Whereupon the commander of the unhappy craft must wade to the ankles and right his ship before it could proceed at the whim of the current. In the still water our boats behaved more reliably. When the sails were properly set and everyone blew his best the brave ships would cross the sea without a shift of canvas.

Once upon a time a small boy from town appeared with a painted tin steamboat; you wound it up, the screw revolved, and the boat went all by itself. Our vessels seemed poor things alongside this wonder, but their advantages soon developed. As a matter of practical navigation the steamer was in chronic shipwreck, for it took bottom even where the water was deepest, and would be lying helpless on its side while our three-masters were manœuvring handily. The town lad did not long persist with his toy; in a little while he abandoned it on the bank for old iron, and with bare feet and turned up trousers

like ourselves was sailing his handsome wooden fleet on the tossing waters of the lake. We had made a sailor of him in short order.

Our young gentleman's hat always handicapped him when it came to fishing. There is but one sound way of netting a fish; as everybody knows. You sink your straw hat to the bottom, a fish comes by, quickly you lift it by the rims, away runs the water and the prey is yours. Our new friend had a try; but, alas, his pretty white hat with a blue riband emerged soft and flabby, of a colour it would bother one to name and no shape at all! Ours, home-made and familiar with hard usage, were just the thing for this game—a touch of sunshine, and you could not tell the difference.

How fair was this river of mine, with golden sand, water of flowing crystal, silvery fish! Every day and every hour you caught a fresh beauty. Were it fine, the sun strewed diamonds where the water lipped the shore, and every wavelet en-

trapped its beam. When it rained, what lovelier than to see the drops leaping in joyous dance from the surface of the lake! In the morning light the old mill stood out like some castle tower; at midday the weathered stones shone dazzling white; the ruins took strange outline in the evening shadows, shifting and changing uncannily.

My river was undefiled. No taint sullied the new-born wave. The fields gave naught that was unseemly—a blade of grass, a leaf, a flower, for the current to bear away. Nothing marred the pebbly bed, the sandy marge. Fearlessly you drank the pure and wholesome water from hollowed hand.

Gentle and constant and of good counsel my river ever was. When some fleeting unhappiness sent the big tears rolling we sought refuge there, and it failed not to administer quiet consolation. Little hearts that were bursting with sobs found comfort in the friendly voice, and the water laved bare feet with a touch that always

had new magic to heal. It was of many moods—lisping through the mosses, laughing across its pebble beds, leaping over tiny falls, and, before it vanished under the bridge and departed forever into the unknown, spreading a mirror at our feet which held reflected all the broad blue sky.

Fain to look upon it once again, I stand on the road and long I gaze . . .

And, gazing, something in my heart strains and snaps. All of this past, a moment since so much alive, is now no better than a dream. Before the cruel fact my vision of old days flies me, fades, dissolves in thinnest air.

Where is now my river? I seem to view it for the first time, and yet all is the same: the king's highway and the wooden bridge; to the west over there the house; up yonder the old mill. But, my river, I do not know you. Sad and unkind that this my beautiful river of thirty years ago, my river broad and deep, should dwindle to a feeble rivulet, scarce better than a sundering ditch! The unscalable rock which in-

vited so many bold attempts, witnessed so many a fall, has shrunk to a rounded stone; the bridge's arch to a yard-wide span. The lake, profound as an inland sea, thinly covers a narrow patch of sand—a pond, not even; hardly to be named a pool. So pinched and insignificant what erstwhile seemed so vast!

How much worthier and better and truer my early visions!

Thus these memories of mine, like homeless birds whose nest a rude wind has tumbled to earth, fly to and fro lamenting over the forlorn brooklet, nor knowing where to rest . . .

Ah! Why have I lost the eyes of childhood!

IN THE BIG HAYCART

DON'T talk to me of your newfangled waggons; with fore wheels, hind wheels, coupling, pole, double swingletree, hooks, chains and other ironmongery, and a skeleton affair atop looking like an ungainly basket. For the carrying of hay nothing that is made can equal the big two-wheeled haycart; with ladders, racks, crossbars and dovetailed forepart. The shafts are good sticks of sound tamarack, and run through to the tail of the cart which carries the tackling to secure the load. The axle-tree, of maple or cherry-birch, is so adjusted that the burden hangs in proper trim and does not bear too heavily on the horse's back. Ladders and racks are allowed some play in the slots holding them, and open to give room for the spread of the mounting hay.

There you have a cart that is something

like!—strong, quick-turning, drawing in to the threshing-floor as if it belonged there. They tell me of city people who never rode in a big haycart; truly these unhappy folk know little of life!

Early in the morning, you might have seen us starting off with Gédéon the farmer. Gédéon's wife Catherine, seated on the ladder lying across the rear of the cart, holds on her knees a basket with a loaf of fresh bread, a good pat of butter, a cut of pork and a bottle of milk for us children. The farmer's son, a strapping fellow whose fork would raise for you the biggest pile of hay without leaving a blade, marches beside the cart and opens and shuts the gates. Our place is with Gédéon, between the forward cross-bars.

For there are many ways of travelling in a haycart and all of them have their delights.

At the back, the advantage is yours of being quite near the ground, and the long stems of growing things tickle your calves.

When the sudden fancy prompts, you can disembark at a moment's notice, gather a raspberry in a fence-corner, run after the retreating cart and jump easily to your seat. It is jolly to be able to do this, but when Grise breaks into a trot—never of her own choice, for the wise old beast is well aware that a haycart is not for racing—if Grise quickens her pace, those on the rear ladder make acquaintance with the rungs, as I can well certify. When that happens the basket is properly joggled, and the farmer's wife too!

In the middle of the cart between the racks you are well placed, that is if you keep a sharp eye on the hay-forks, your neighbours. But beware of the ruts, for you are just above the axle and have full benefit of the jolts. There is no denying it is an uneasy spot on a long journey; but with a cushion of hay, and a bit of a laugh ready when Grise takes to trotting, there is nothing better to be asked.

In front you have the effect of springs, and, better still, you drive the horse! What

joy to sit there dangle-legs beside Gédéon, by the horse's very tail, with a living animal before you who answers motion and word! To hold the lines—real rope lines —in your proper hands; at your will to pull on your left and mark Grise obediently haw; and then to gee her back with a pull on the right—actually driving, if you please! Of such delights the life of man is not overfull. It was a matter of continual amazement that Gédéon himself seemed indifferent about driving. True enough, he would take the reins when we were going down the Coteau de Roches, but apparently it gave him no thrill, and, the awkward descent accomplished, he relinquished them without betraying any shade of reluctance.

It is likely that Gédéon, with Grise off his mind, found himself the freer to smoke his pipe and talk. For, all the way up the long rise across the fields, he used to tell us stories. Sometimes they were of winters in the shanties of the Saint-Maurice; sometimes of desperate battles fought at

no particular time or place, but in which the puissant Napoleon unfailingly routed the English. Oftenest the tales were drawn from sacred history. His account of the deluge was pre-eminently entrancing. We beheld the ark in course of building: an exaggerated flat with a barn on top and stalls and pens from end to end like a huge stable. Good Father Noah with his mighty fork tossed and tossed hay into the loft—crammed it full, because the elephants took a whole truss at a bite. When the ark was ready and provisioned, the animals marched in two by two, and the business of counting and naming them was well nigh endless. At length the rain began, and Gédéon, with memory of our own great flood, became truly eloquent. When the rising waters topped the church steeples we looked at one another and gasped; I even forgot to drive the mare, who, none the less, kept on following the cart-ruts with unhurried pace.

Just about the time the dove would be

returning to the ark with a sprig of St. John's wort in her beak we passed through the last gate and found ourselves in the second concession lot where the hay, cut overnight and gathered into cocks, awaited the haymakers.

How we tore the cocks to pieces and turned and scattered the ripening hay! I warrant you our forks sent it flying and showering in the air!

But soon we tired, and while the work went forward, ran to where Grise was standing unharnessed in the shade. A score of things invited doing: to jump the fences, play at see-saw on the haycart, eat raspberries, gather wild cherries, chase butterflies, capture field-mice in their nests, go fishing. Beneath a certain little bridge—Well I see it now—a limpid brook ran over its stony bed, and the pool was simply full of tiny silver fish. We netted them with our straw hats which gained a most refreshing coolness from the experience.

As the morning wore away the piles dotted here and there vanished one by one,

and the field was strewn with hay which smelt deliciously as it dried in the sun.

The noontide angelus from the distant steeple brought the haymakers to join us.

Gédéon bared his head:—'The angel of the Lord announced to Mary . . .' Turning toward the church, whose flowered cross and weathercock shone in the sunlight above the Coteau de Roches, we made response.

The basket was opened, and the table for our meal was the side of the ditch.

With his pocket-knife Gédéon made a sign of the cross above the loaf before cutting it. What fine bread and butter and milk! How sharp-set we were for the buttery slices! And merely to watch Gédéon's valiant eating would have awakened appetite.

But God's haymaking weather is not for squandering, and when Gédéon had dozed a little with a wisp of hay under his head the work recommenced.

The sun's growing heat by now had

dried the hay which the rake set to piling into cocks for the last time. Jumping over them is a splendid exercise after dinner, and we took a spell at this while Gédéon was putting Grise in the shafts to house the crop.

We youngsters, Catherine aiding, packed down the hay. An easy job, you are thinking, but that shows you have never tried. I wager you would not have the least idea what to do with the first forkfuls, nor how to spread them on the bottom of the cart to the height of the racks so as to give a good broad bed for the load above. Perhaps you imagine that in going the round of the field from cock to cock a horse behaves in the ordinary way. I should like to see you at it! You are away up between hay and sky, waiting in trustful ignorance while someone either throws you a bundle or bids the horse move on. A sudden jolt, the wheel in a hole, you go heels over head to the ground, likely as not with a bone smashed. It has to be managed better than that. When-

ever a cock is loaded, Gédéon calls to those aloft 'Hold on tight!' That is all, and enough; Grise perfectly understands; she starts off without more and stops beside the next heap; as for yourself, the cart may pitch and you can laugh, for at Gédéon's warning you flung yourself belly-flat on the heaving tossing hay.

When the loading is done, Gédéon trims off with his fork the loose hay which hangs down untidily all round; we scramble up and lie there while the cart makes for the barn at the end of our land by the concession line.

The last load is aboard and on its way to the village as night is falling, and we are perched on top.

Of all fashions of journeying in the big cart this is surely the best. There you are, almost buried in the sweet hay, and the soft yielding couch translates the worst bumps into a gentle rocking which lulls you to sleep.

You are dreamily thinking that the kind

grandmother at home will have supper ready, and that quite possibly there will be rounds of bread thick-covered with sweet cream and maple sugar for the small folk who have spent a long day in the fields.

CALLING THE COWS

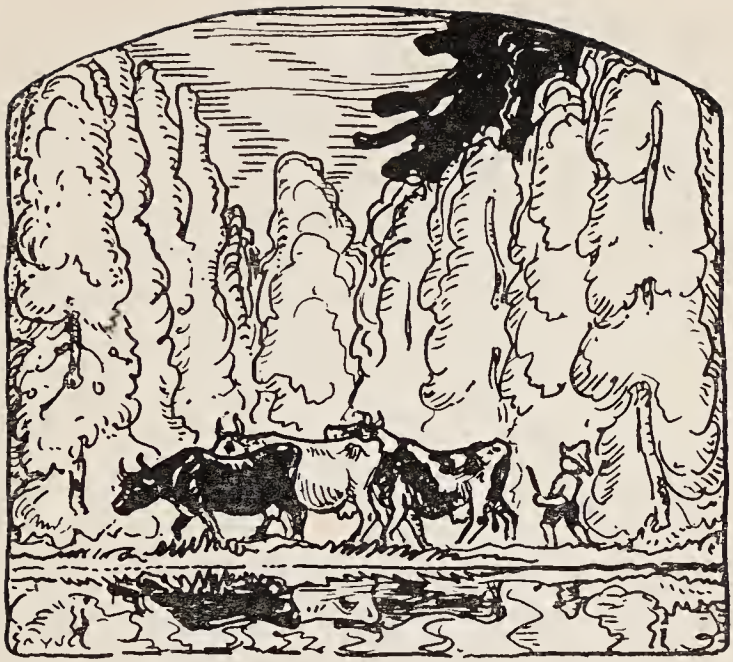
FIVE o'clock! Come along children; time you were off after the cows,—and away we go. They pasture in the upper field which it was so troublesome to rid of stumps. Driving them out and fetching them back, morning and evening, we follow the highway which passes the *curé's* orchard till we gain the farm-road leading up to the sugar-bush. It is quite a step, but there is a fortunate short cut across a thicket of white birches where strawberries raspberries and blueberries ripen at their appointed seasons. Strawberries and raspberries and blueberries always grow in short cuts, and this tends to make them longer than the longest way round.

How beautiful this birch wood! Springs unite to form a tiny lake in the heart of it, and the quiet ripples die on grassy shores.

Beneath the branches all about, insects make the music God composes. Two lofty pines, lost amid the birches, murmur in the breeze which sets every delicate needle trembling. The lake catches to its bosom the sky's blue, the leaves' new green, the white boles; and the wavy mirror blends them in happy dance. Now and then a splash out yonder tells of a fish on the move. Fish, be it known, as long as that . . . !

What strawberries we found in the little birch wood—big as garden strawberries, red as red could be, and juicy! No sooner were the tops of the birches in sight than our mouths began to water at thought of them.

So much for the short cut through the wood. The path to it was rough and stony, but our bare feet had followed many another, and moreover there were compensations—the *curé's* orchard was not beside the road for nothing! Your apple is a fruit of common property; and, furthermore, did we not drive home the beadle's



Driving them out and fetching them back, we follow the highway . . .

cow with our own? This established a kind of lien on the *curé's* apples, and we picked till our pockets bulged. Big green apples with a touch of red on the sunny side, running with juice, hard as stones. How passing good they were!

The squirrels on the fences along the way—I had nearly forgotten them!

It is no easy trick to capture a squirrel alive. The equipment is a rod with a light-running noose at the end fashioned of three horse-hairs. You creep forward without breathing till the little creature sitting on a post, tail over back and eating a nut, is within reach. Slowly then, with infinite precautions, you slip the noose over the nibbler's head. It calls for a quick eye and a steady hand. The least puff of wind twisting the snare or shifting the rod, the faintest sound, the slightest warning of danger, and you face a bare post while the wee beastie is flying along the fence-rails. But so pretty is it to see the escape that one scarcely has heart for lamentation. None but those who have chased squirrels can

guess how a black hair loop depending over a small red head makes a child's heart go!

Munching apples, picking strawberries, pursuing squirrels, at last we reach the upper pasture and hear the tinkling bell of Rousse, mistress of the herd, who yields, one milking with another, some thirteen quarts a day. It is getting late, as the sun's low beams remind us.

Quickly we round up the cows scattered through the brush. 'Coo boss, coo boss' —chewing their cuds behind an upturned root. Coo boss, coo boss'—lying hidden in the bushes. 'Coo boss, coo boss.' Rousse takes the right path homeward all by herself and the others fall in behind—a string of heavy animals wending slowly toward the village. Carefully latching the gate we follow after, and keep the lazier ones moving with our switches.

Must I confess that even now we cannot refrain from gathering another handful of strawberries in the wood? The good beasts halt; a look in their patient eyes as though they were thinking: 'Could we,

too, but leap the fence!' They turn to grazing on the turf between the horse-track and wheel-ruts.

The people in the house begin to be a little impatient: 'Those little rascals! As sure as you live they are up in the birch wood again, gobbling strawberries instead of bringing home the cows!'

And then Rousse's bell, keeping time to her deliberate step, sounds in the distance. They open the sliding gate, shut the garden tight, and close the door of the barn. 'Coo boss, coo.' The cows file into the yard to be milked. In the gathering darkness the chewing of many cuds, anxious lowings toward the stable, that sweetest sound of milk falling on milk.

High from the steeple fall the last notes of the angelus on field and farm. The hour of the cows has come and gone.

THE DESERTED HOUSE

WE children were afraid of it and never ventured near.

And yet the garden gate was open —lying on the ground, indeed, with broken hinges; and no one was there to say you nay. On the way back from school or church—we were preparing then for our first communion—it would have been pleasant enough to stop half way and rest awhile on the low steps of the deserted house; the more so as plums, cherries, apples and gooseberries ripened in the orchard close by, and self-sown flowers, overrunning the walks, fought with the rankly growing weeds for a share of sun and dew. It was free to anyone; yet we hastened along fearfully, without pausing.

The house was to us a sepulchre by the road-side. Planks roughly nailed across door and windows barred up the melancholy abode. Never a wisp of smoke curled

from the stone chimney; never a ray of sunlight fell across the threshold; never a gleam shone through those blinded eyes. Sightless and deaf, the house seemed indifferent alike to the wide glory of the fields, to the swish and rustle of the wind over the meadows. Nothing stirred its chill insensibility; no human voice waked an echo within. Human?—but had not the night wind borne long-drawn mournful cries to many a passer-by from out the dead habitation?

One of us was for tearing the boards from a window to look in, but none had the hardihood to venture. There might be something frightful beneath that roof; shadows would be stealing about behind those fastened windows. Were your eyes to fall on a room all draped in black with a coffin and a corpse and candles burning! . . . In the evening we kept the far side of the road and turned away our heads; afraid of what we might see.

If the house did not shelter the ghosts of our childish imagining, its walls har-

boured sad memories, and departed days still were haunting the empty rooms.

Once the abandoned house was full of life and happiness;—happiness in the laughter of many children and the light-hearted mirth of grandparents;— life made beautiful by the toil that hallows every passing day and builds strong souls. For a century and more, sons succeeded fathers in the possession of these sunny acres which never failed of nourishment for all. For a century and more, children were born, lived their lives and died in this same house, now forsaken; and of them every one as he made ready for his last journey sent a departing glance of farewell through this window across these same woods and fields.

But a day fell when the property descended to an heir in whom the ancient spirit dwelt not. This lover of indolent ways grudged the earth the travail of his hands and the sweat of his face, and the earth denied him increase. Bread was lacking in the house. In his aliened heart

he cursed the soil which yearned only to be fruitful and mourned the barrenness of its untilled fields. In a vision of easy-won affluence the faithless habitant took the resolve to desert his country. Selling beasts, furniture, all that pertained to his farm; barring the door and the windows of this home of his people as one nails up a coffin, he went his way.

And since that hour the emigrant's house has stood closed and empty, as though under a malediction; a place of terror for children, of melancholy to the neighbours, an open wound in the parish.

Have those who so depart full consciousness that in doing it they meanly quit the post of honour, are recreant to high duty? Do they lightly imagine that they are leaving behind only four walls and a roof? In truth what they abandon and forswear is no less than their native land! For one, the mountains; for another, the plain. But whether on hillside or in hollow, here lies the parish in which their ancestors' quiet lives slipped by, the church where they bent

the knee, the earth that guards their bones; the farm which throve by dint of their harsh incessant toil; the precious store of household tradition, the wholesome fireside ways; worship of the past and reverence for its memories; nay, it may be, the very speech of their fathers and the faith itself that sustained them. This, all this rich inheritance do they toss away; their own country thrown with careless hand into the barter!

And yet I beseech thee, O Mother Earth, set not thy curse upon those who have gone, for all are not so thankless. If some have denied and forgotten thee in the smoke and din of cities, know that hard fate alone has driven many forth, and that in remoteness they keep faith with thee, dream of thee still, love thee before the land of their sojourning. O Mother Earth, be mindful of them under whatsoever skies they labour, for they are yet thy children. They keep alive their country's soul in strange lands, and practise the lessons thou has taught them in youth.

Await them hopefully, kind Mother. Tender and merciful, give them welcome on the day when exile passes their enduring and fate permits them to return. Border the way with brightest flowers, shed abroad a warmer light, deck thyself in freshest loveliest green to greet their homecoming. Yield thy broad bosom to the plough-shares of thy returning sons, O fruitful Mother; take to thy furrows the seed flung by their scarred hands; joyously send up the tall heavy-headed wheat; let the grass spring lush in the meadows and the woods be filled with pleasant sounds; waft through all the opened windows of the re-awakened house the fragrant breath of new-mown hay!

OUR COUNTRY

'WHAT do you think about it, Uncle Jean? People keep talking of country, and the love of country; speakers have the words forever on their lips, and writers on the tip of the pen. What *is* one's country, Uncle Jean?'

Uncle Jean was sitting on the door-step thoughtfully smoking his pipe. All the farm lay stretched before him to its uttermost limit: his fields of wheat, barley, oats and hay; a patch of buckwheat, then a bit of waste land, the sugar-bush bounding the horizon. The sun was down, and the old man watched his farm settling into darkness.

'What is our country, Uncle Jean?'

Two or three times he drew out his pipe in silence and blew a cloud of smoke; then, with eyes still bent on the distant woods, a wide sweep of his hand embraced fields

meadows and forest, and thus he spoke: 'Our country? It is just that.'

I waited for something to eke out the vagueness of words and gesture, and at length, with slow speech and many pauses, he took up his parable.

'Our country, my lad? For that you must go back to the days of the French. The first of our name to come oversea was a soldier. In the cupboard of the best room are papers where it is written he was a soldier. But we have reason to think that he came from Perche in the old country—on the ragged edge of Normandy, so to speak. We fancy that his people over there were farmers and that love of the soil ran in his blood, for as soon as he could he was at the forest with an ax like a true pioneer. Precisely here did he fell his first tree, and the land old Nicolas cleared is mine to-day. This clay on my heels once stuck to his wooden shoes. After him, his eldest son Julien, and his grandson Jean-Baptiste, and his great-grandson François, and François' son Benjamin, my

father—all of them, one after the other, lived on the land that feeds me. Every one of them was born here, worked here, and died here. Often when thinking of it I say to myself "It was for you that they toiled, Jean; for you and for those of your race who shall come after." Boy, do you see that great stone near the end of the barn? Once on a time it must have been more to the south, on the line of the road that runs to the upper fields. Well, they rolled it to the place where you find it now —to give me elbow-room as I pass to the north of the brook! I warrant you it took a pretty good shove. Thinking it over, as often I do, it seems to me likely that Julien, the second of our name, attended to that. It is said of him that he was strong as an ox; and he would have plenty of help, for the first dozen of his children were all boys. They built the house on the knoll where still it stands—the same foundation, at any rate—so that I might be able to look from the door right across to the sugar-bush. They thought of

everything; that elm was spared to give my cattle a little shade on a hot day. Everywhere I see their handiwork. Each one of them left his mark, and the labour of their stout arms lightens mine. I spade the earth more easily to-day because one by one they turned it. The sweat that ran from their foreheads helps to grow the wheat whereof is made my daily bread. Something of themselves lingers in every sod cast up by my plough-share. Well, that is what our country is—and I should like to see the American who would come and take my land from me!'

I should explain that Uncle Jean descried the universal foe of his people in *the American.*

'I think I understand, Uncle Jean. This is your property—family property—and you love it. But the books say that "our country" is ever so much bigger than a farm—the whole of our land taken together.'

Uncle Jean shook his head. 'As a rule it is wise to mistrust books. They have

words in them one does not understand, that confuse one's thoughts. Books have nothing in the world to do with this. Hearken to me. Over there to the sou'-west lives François le Terrien, and beyond him Pierre the son of Denis, and then other neighbours and other neighbours again. To the nor'east we have big Guillaume and old Ambrose's two sons; and more neighbours and yet more neighbours to the end of the concession and the end of the parish. Now let us say—I do not know precisely that it is the case everywhere, but it ought to be—let us say that every man of them like myself is on land that belonged to his people. You would have a whole parish rooted in the soil, wouldn't you? And then in the centre stands the church; alongside it, the burying-ground; close by, the *curé's* house and the *curé* himself inside it. After our parish there is another parish, and another and another, all alike; and each with its church steeple, its *curé,* its buried dead, its old soil worked by fathers and fathers' fathers, which one loves more than one's

self—There you have it, this country of ours!'

Uncle Jean had risen to his feet, and now I saw that the sweep of his hand, widened in the fallen night, covered the whole breadth of the land inherited from those of old time—the memories, the traditions, the beliefs . . . .

Aunt Melanie's voice summoned us:—'Jean, are you coming for evening prayer?'

We entered the room where the figure of the Christ with a branch blessed on Palm Sunday hangs upon the wall, and below it a long musket with powder-flask and shot-horn.

As the uncle was about to kneel beside Aunt Melanie his glance fell on the old gun, and I heard him mutter:—'Yes indeed! I should like to see the American who would come and take my land from me!—*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Let us enter into the presence of God and worship Him . . .*'

THE AUCTION FOR THE DEAD

'THIS way, everybody!—To the auction for souls in purgatory.'

Mass is just over and the faithful are coming out of church. Through the open doors sound the last strains of the old organ, and the beadle is seen putting out the candles on the high altar.

It is All Souls' Day. The congregation has besought the mercy of God upon the departed, and many as they leave the sacred building send a glance toward the white headstones of the graveyard. In the coming year, whose turn shall it be to join that assembly under the sod . . .

After the Sunday mass there is never haste to be gone. People linger in the open space before the church, fall into groups, light their pipes, listen to the announcements of the crier. Generally he has little to say. He may give word of a barn-raising at Pierre Milot's, who has had a

fire, or invite the owner to apply to Michel Taillon, finder of a red handkerchief with a couple of silver coins knotted in the corner on the Sept-Crans road. Perhaps there may be an intimation on behalf of the trustees to the effect that the school-house in the second district is now repaired, a teacher engaged and classes are about to open.

This does not take long, and such minor notices are commonly given from the church steps. But on All Souls' Day the crier has a longer task on his hands, and for it mounts the stand at the end of the little square.

'This way, everyone!—To the auction for the souls in purgatory.'

It may be that our peasants make less parade of sorrow than those who go through life with heart on sleeve. They are inclined to hide their sadness in their own bosoms, and are loth to speak of it to the first comer. Those who know but little of the nature in them may deem their

mourning brief; but is the grief shallower and less enduring that is not flaunted to the world?

They are mindful of their dead. If they be not forever weeping above a grave, it is because the mortal body lying there seems in truth a little thing beside the freed spirit—a spirit mayhap suffering the pains of expiation. Our peasants bestow on those whom they have lost that best of memories—prayer. Ever mindful of the dead, learn how they make part with them in the labours of their days:

'If my garden comes on well, some needy soul shall have my best head of cabbage and a string of onions'—promises a woman.

'As for me,' her man will be saying 'should they win me a good crop, I will give three bushels of my best grain, and something more into the bargain.'

On the morning of All Souls' Day everyone brings his promised offering and turns it over to the auctioneer after mass so that it may be sold to the highest bidder for the benefit of deserving souls.

The most incongruous things are heaped together on the stand at the auctioneer's feet. Amid bulging pumpkins and pallid turnips reposes a most inviting shape of brawn; a pound of tobacco in the twist is neighbour to a length of homespun; cheek by jowl with a bundle of flax is a bottle of maple syrup; a fowl clucks in its coop; a pig squeals in a bag; and so on and so on.

The auctioneer musters up his eloquence: —'The auction for the souls of the dead will now begin. All of us have had our losses, and, without intending to be in the least unkind, a good many of our departed are likely to be in purgatory; for certain of them were not altogether right-living. Well! Here is your chance for a bit of a shove that will land them in Paradise! Open your purses, my friends. This is for the souls in purgatory; moreover you won't find any worm-holes in what I have to sell! Take a look at this pumpkin here to begin with; all I can do to lift it. What am I

offered for the pumpkin?—no common pumpkin, mark you! *Thirty cents!* Only thirty cents bid for the pumpkin—for the finest pumpkin in the parish! *Thirty cents!* Aren't you forgetting this is for the souls in torment? Such a pumpkin as that should release no fewer than three . . . Forty cents! Fifty cents! Fifty! Come on! Come on! For the souls of the departed, remember. Maybe some relative of yours is reckoning on this very pumpkin to give him a leg up to the skies . . . Sixty cents! . . . Seventy-five . . . Eighty cents!—You shall have a high mass, sung in the very best style by our choristers, the parish choristers. They will throw their hearts into it; they will sing as loud as you please. You know them well—not schoolchildren, they . . . Ninety cents! Be a little more generous, friends, and make it a dollar . . . Ninety! . . . Ninety . . . *One dollar!* That's better;—better yet if you don't stop at a dollar. There's a lot of dying in this parish. We must think of our dead . . . A dollar-five!

. . . A dollar-ten! . . . *Now* you're talking . . . *One dollar and a half!* . . . A dollar and a half! . . . Will anyone raise the bid? . . . A dollar-fifty, *once!* . . . A dollar-fifty, *twice!* . . . Look sharp, now! The pumpkin is going at a dollar and a half . . . A dollar-fifty, *three times!*—The pumpkin is sold! Pay your money and take your pumpkin, Baptiste. Next I shall put up a roll of rag-carpet—five yards in the roll. How much for the rag-carpet? . . . Bear in mind it is for the souls of the departed! . . . '

And our good folks keep bidding up and up. Little do they measure the worth of what they get; is it not for the souls of the dead, and so to be undertaken in a large spirit? Once a cabbage fetched three dollars!—And the purchaser put it up again for sale. This cabbage netted no less than four dollars and a half before it was finally knocked down.

The auctioneer goes off when the sale is over to deliver the proceeds to the *curé*. It lies in his hands as the treasure of the

departed, and is devoted to masses for the dead.

These auctions are held every Sunday in November and at various times throughout the year. The fund is sometimes increased by individual gifts. Not seldom it happens that a good habitant finds money for a mass, asking that it be said for the parishioner's soul in bitterest need.

No, our peasants are not forgetful of their dead. They pray for those of their kin who are crying from the abyss to the Lord for mercy.

. . . *O Lord, their desire is with Thee, their sorrow is ever before Thee and their groaning is not hid. All the evenings and mornings of their days do they put their trust in Thee because of Thy law. O Lord, hasten to succour them. Have pity upon them according to Thy mercy. In Thy justice hearken unto their petition. Shine in Thy eternal splendour upon their night, and let the bones which Thou hast humbled leap for gladness!* . . .

BEGGARS

THROUGH the wide-open door the sun was streaming clear through the house into the addition beyond. The dog, roused from his sleep on the door-step, sprang up growling. The farmer's wife glanced towards the road:—'Another, beggar,' quoth she. 'Quiet there, Azor! Come here! Be off with you! Go and lie under the oven.' Anger rumbling within him, the Newfoundland does as he is bid.

Whereupon the mendicant draws near, receives a bowlful of flour, and goes his way pursued by stifled barks from beneath the oven.

French-Canadian dogs never fail to bark at a beggar. The trusty wardens scent mischief to the house in these wandering gentry of the roads; the instinct of dislike embracing every bearer of the wallet, whether he be honest beggarman, gipsy,

vagrant, thief, weaver of spells, quack or sharper. All of them are mercilessly chased away, unless a charitable master's voice gives sharp reminder of what is owing to hospitality.

But of these many kinds of beggars all are not ill-disposed. The first broad division we made was between beggars coming from afar, those hailing from a neighbouring parish, and our own particular beggars.

We never precisely knew the home of the beggar 'from afar.' He was not of the country-side, but belonged somewhere 'down yonder;' below Quebec, perhaps; or up the Richelieu Valley; possibly across the St. Lawrence on the North Shore. His story puts it vaguely that he 'comes from afar.'

But we were well acquainted with him. His rounds were as orderly as the march of the four seasons, and when he was due to turn up the road leading to our concession we awaited his coming, desiring or dreading it according to the reputation he

His story puts it vaguely that he 'comes from afar.'

bore. For the type shows beggary under many guises, and some have title to a better welcome than others.

At the outset we have the Simon Pure beggar of classic association and well-settled tradition.

He is generally a little old chap, much bent through his wayfaring and the carrying of burdens rather than by age, clad in rags and wearing a seedy Top-hat. The handle of a basket is over his arm, in his hand a crooked staff,—'On account of the dogs, my dear sir, only on account of the dogs, for, God be praised, my legs are good yet'—with a large sack strapped across his shoulders. So he goes along the king's highway, always afoot, and always at a like pace, dry or wet.

The warm weather brings him back, and only this once in the year do we see him. He follows his beat so unchangingly that you can tell, almost to a day, when he will be knocking at the door of such a house in the first concession, of such another

in the second. The parishes of the South Shore commonly have their concessions laid out in parallel with the St. Lawrence. The old man takes (let us say) the first concession road to Gentilly, which is the main concession line running through the village, and pursues it to the river Saint-François; then he turns up the crossroad to the second concession and works along it in the direction of Quebec; and so on. If, again, he should fall upon Saint-Grégoire from Nicolet by way of the Quarante-Arpents, or from Sainte-Monique by the Grand-Saint-Esprit, he will quarter the concessions of La Rochelle, Videpoche, Pointu and Beauséjour in turn.

It is not everywhere that my gentleman stops! At certain houses he dines, at others he sups, at others yet he puts up for the night. And you may be assured he makes his selection for the soundest reasons.

For the most part the beggarman gives large villages the go-by—the more sophisticated places where, truth to tell, the villagers are not over-eager for his company.

But 'in the concessions' there are people who know well what's what, and they live in houses where he can feel quite at home. You might go so far as to say that they are happy to have him, and they remark upon it should he tarry in his coming . . . 'Such nice manners! So deeply humble in entreating alms "for the love of God and of the holy Virgin"! What a way with him in giving thanks!—"May God restore it to you manyfold!" '

And it must not be forgotten that the old mendicant has come from afar. What things has he not seen and countries visited! How many stories he knows! What a fine lot of gossip he has gathered on the road! The evening round of duties fulfilled and supper over, one is free to hear him discourse; and in this coin he settles his score. The long tale unwinds. He yarns about the hardships people suffer in his part of the world; about the promise of crops, good or bad, and the rains or drought that afflict the parishes below; the grasshoppers which would have stripped

everything bare, had not Monsieur le Curé banished them, but which, the *curé* notwithstanding, have done a deal of mischief; the dances, the extravagance, the deplorable vainness of women-folk, and the feathers they stick in their hats; of rumoured battles; the damage wrought by the last thaw . . . The old boy unfolds his store till the hour of evening prayer. He joins in this devoutly—kneeling with the rest under the large black cross that pledges the family to sobriety.

He is provided with a mattress on the kitchen floor, and sometimes with a sleigh-robe for covering; a truce arranged, he spends the night beside the dog.

The old man is astir very early, and equipped with stick, basket and sack—'Until we meet next year.' He is off; but he has not forgotten to thank the good gentleman for giving him shelter, the kind lady for contributing an egg to his basket and a skein of wool to his sack.

When the basket holds a dozen eggs and the sack becomes too weighty, the beggar

does a little trading. The small gatherings fetch a few cents which he deposits in his bank—a huge red handkerchief lying securely knotted in the basket beside his clay pipe and tobacco-pouch.

There you have the honest decent beggar. No ugly word is upon his lips. He makes a show of being satisfied even when alms are denied, and never falls to grumbling. Should a well-to-do farmer's wife fob off on him the very littlest egg laid by the very youngest of her fowls, he may allow himself to make fun of it. And if given a choice he has no hesitation in declaring his preference for the eggs of black hens, which he proceeds to pick out with sly judiciousness to everyone's amusement: black hens always lay the biggest eggs!

In the old days before post offices and postal deliveries, the far-travelling beggar did errands and carried letters. He was a sure rather than a swift messenger; nothing entrusted to him went astray. Although he could only spell out print he never made

a mistake in an address. Suppose you handed to Bellerive, on his way through Baie-du-Febure, a letter for your cousin living at Trois-Pistoles; you could be certain that sooner or later it would be delivered—a trifle dog's-eared perhaps, but intact. Most faithfully, too, the beggar-man would carry you back an answer—the next year. Those were the good old days!

The quack is of another class. He likewise hails from somewhere away off and still more difficult to place. Nobody cares to press the question, for the fellow is an ugly customer.

He begs, but it must be well understood that his doing so is the merest accident. It comes about solely because people are too stupid to recognize the value of his medicines, and choose to hand over their good hard money to the doctors for useless drugs. He was not born to mendicancy, and let them be quite clear that in running up and down the country thus he is but gratifying a wish to help the suffering, to

heal their every ill. If he wanted to he could stay at home, hold his head high, and live in idleness! He talks loud and fast. A medley of old books, packs of cards, bits of string, boxes of ointment and bottles stuffs his valise—his equipment of learning, his instruments and chemist's shop, all his medical stock-in-trade. Here are medicines that are medicines indeed! Nothing is able to stand up before them. Not such little pills as the doctors deal in, fit to poison the very blood in your veins; not the physic they sell in bottles to defraud poor folk—worth less than honest dish-water, when, indeed, it is not actual venom. Now this ointment—you might fancy it has the look of axle-grease—will banish a pleurisy in the time you would take to tell of it, and is infallible, as well, for sore eyes. The other, here, will cure a festered hand quicker than winking. A drop from this bottle in a hot drink masters a slow fever without taking months and months like those patent medicines. For mumps, hang-nails, sprains, ricked backs,

itch, strains, bites, corns, goitre, whitlows and, very particularly, for toothache, the quack has the only and sovereign remedy —even to the iron comb for re-adjusting the lid of a stomach which has slipped its hinges!

Unhappy the sick who have no faith in his cure-all; equally unhappy the well who refuse what he demands for his eating! He peers into their future and prophesies things which disquiet simple souls. The quack is well able on occasion to use that stick of his like a tomahawk. It may be guessed that his advent throws a whole concession into panic. If the men are in the fields, the women-folk bar doors and close shutters, the children take refuge under the beds. Should the way lie clear to him by accident, the beggar-quack walks in without 'by your leave' and makes himself at home: 'Cook me pancakes!—pancakes in pork fat!' A king and master, he orders people about and scolds—and Josette cooks his pancakes for him! That is to say unless the man of the house should

happen to come back unexpectedly, or unless, as sometimes befalls, Josette is of the kind not easily frightened and boasts a pair of arms stout enough to protect her dwelling from invasion. The beggar will then do wisely to make the best use of his legs.

In former days the quack often practised in addition the trade of moulding spoons. But the spoon-founder, the travelling clock-mender, the bear-leader, deserve chapters to themselves.

Another type of beggar comes down the high road. A dour and silent person, this one, with his eyes on the ground; a weaver of spells!

He greets no one, not even Monsieur le Curé, and makes his abrupt and tactless demand in surly tones. If the gift be small, he grumbles; when repulsed, he curses outright and threatens with 'You shall have cause to remember me.' At times he mutters incomprehensible words —some abracadabra, it may be. The word goes that he keeps forever talking

with an invisible companion of his travels.

When he has gone by, horses die of the bots, cows dry up, fowls get broody, bread won't rise, dogs go lame, rats overrun the granaries; the sorcerer-beggar has woven a spell!

How to shield yourself from the mischief?—for his magic makes light of closed doors. There is but one sure way to avert ill: on no account must you provoke him to talking. Door and windows are shut up tight and a few coppers left on the sill. He takes the money and departs without knocking.

This kind of beggar is passing, for the country-folk have lost faith in enchantments.

The Bohemians gipsies are reckoned among the beggars who 'come from afar.'

They travel in company, with their families, and in a vehicle of sorts. The mendicant is not a gipsy, nor is the vagrant or the tramp; but vagrants with wife and children, in a big hay-cart drawn by a

creature of skin and bone, are classed as gipsies. You may have a number of families in their several conveyances with dogs and horses following.

The gipsies are an entirely homeless folk. They move and live and eat and sleep in their carts. Where evening finds them they make camp beside the road—on a common, a strip of untilled land, a stubble-field.

Terrible rascals these are, who do not go begging for their amusement. Ostensibly horse-copers, they do business in the buying selling and trading of horses. And they have a name for stealing children! When they are encamped near by it is an easy job to get all the brats to bed in good time! Not a one is missing next morning; but chickens have vanished from the hen-house, hay from the mow and milk from the shed. The gipsies have not been idle.

The beggar from a neighbouring parish now comes on the scene. They call him

'The Carp,' 'Pipe-in-jaw,' 'Bear's-grease,' 'The Hairy One,' 'Coach-and-Four.' The *curé* and the notary know his real name; but the world at large is satisfied to use the vivid nickname, descriptively bestowed. The Carp is short and broad and flat, like the fish he suggests. Coach-and-Four is so dubbed from his smart turn-out—a ramshackle box on a pair of wobbling wheels wearily dragged by a beast too ancient to remember there was ever a day he could trot. For these beggars from the next parish always make their summer rounds in a cart of four-post gig, and use a low box-sleigh in winter. The trap fills up with every kind of edible—flour, wheat, hay, vegetables and what not. And all the faster because this object of charity not only accepts what he is given but takes what no one has offered. To put it quite plainly he is often a bit of a thief, and prospers well with the double string to his bow. Some have even arrived at being money-lenders, and to lend money one must have it!

Occasionally he brings along his wife and children, for people have become so sadly distrustful that he is driven to meet them on their own ground. The little band disperses on the outskirts of a village; and while papa is begging or chaffering in front of a house, chatting with people and keeping them amused, the children leap the fences and nose round the outbuildings, especially the hen-house. When evening assembles the flock, each has something to show for his exertions.

By a gradual extension of his wanderings and the field of his adventure, your beggar from the next parish may develop into a full-fledged gipsy.

Then we have beggars native to the parish, for though none starve, the poor are always with us. These are not true mendicants but they have need of charity, and the two things are by no means the same.

I do not know how it comes about, but the parish beggar always lives at the far end of the concession. He has a tumble-down

house and a horde of ragged children. His personal appearance, his family and his manner of life are a standing jest in the parish. People invariably call him by a nickname, and often there is a string to it. 'The Eel' ever finds good reason for being idle and for wriggling out of danger when threatened with work. 'The Gaper's' mouth certifies to his name. 'Pancake-Joe' was reared on buckwheat cakes (No bitter disparagement here, for buckwheat cakes cooked on the top of the stove and eaten hot and hot with maple-syrup are surely the finest things imaginable!) 'Old Decorum,' a wizened figure of fun, is fond of lecturing children upon the art of right living. 'Moses of the Rats' has begotten a string of little Rats so long as to pass beyond counting.

Shiftless and improvident, sometimes half-witted, often crippled in body, the parish beggar is above and before all lazy.

The saying goes that birds of a feather flock together, and his wife is a match for him. Neither of them makes pretence of

trying to earn a living. When the husband is offered a simple and easy job he will scramble through anyhow; regarding it as a chance disturbance of life's even tenor. For the most part he does not so much as take the trouble to go a-begging. Why fatigue himself? Has not the parish a plain duty to keep him and his wife and his children alive? When the kind folk about him seem to grow weary in good endeavour and his store falls low, his faithful spouse has only to make a few calls, telling the neighbours her woes, upbraiding them if needs be, and all comes right again.

No one in the concession slaughters ox, calf, sheep or pig without setting aside a decent portion which is duly convoyed to the beggar's home.

The house-to-house collection made at Christmas time is on behalf of the parish beggars, and the proceeds are dispensed with a nice regard for their well-being. Were the sleigh-loads of meat, grain, vegetables, wood, old clothes and boots handed

over, the whole would disappear like smoke; so these are left in charge of a judicious neighbour who doles them out, little by little, as the want arises. All the feckless one is called upon to do is to carry in, stick by stick, the sawn and split firewood they have corded at his door.

The unfavoured of fortune in a way basks in her smile. He toils not neither does he spin, he is without care or thought for the morrow, the provisionment of his daily bread fails not.

When the beggar is a bachelor or a widower he pursues another course of life. From the New Year to the 31st of December his idle days are dedicated to the parish at large; family after family finds him in board and lodging and passes him on from house to house.

The habitant's dwelling is not spacious and there are children to fill it. No matter! An old mattress—the beggar's mattress, awaiting him on a beam in the attic—is carried down and laid in a corner of the bake-house. Thenceforward the stranger

is at home; and there he will abide for a season if not given too much to do. The household is perfectly aware how sincere is his hatred of work, and it would be rude and tactless to invite him to exert himself. But good manners permit the suggestion that for the fun of the thing and to while away an hour he should undertake some of the women's lesser tasks, like shelling corn, sorting grain for seed or peas for the soup, winding wool, making tobacco leaf into twist.

After he has slept beneath the same roof and eaten at the same board for a week or two the beggar grows bored, bundles up his rags and is off to a neighbour's.

No tears are shed at his departure. When he shall have gone the round of the parish, back he will come. They regard his visits as a species of voluntary tithe.

The French-Canadian habitant gives alike to the knavish or lazy and to the honest mendicant, because charity is part of his religion. Even the well-to-do beggar must not be refused his dole, for,

plainly, if he did not beg he would be poor, and if not indigent it is by grace of his begging. To everyone his lot in this world; and his the beggar's lot.

Yea, and God be praised for it, we are told that a cup of cold water is never given in vain . . .

My brothers of the soil, truly your hearts are of gold!

FIRE

ALL day long the sullen gray sky has leaned above the fields. A hot wind springs up towards evening and angry clouds roll down, black and very low. The uneasy cattle huddle together and move towards the houses in search of cover, and the birds are winging to their nests. Somewhere beyond the mountains continuous thunder rumbles.

It promises a stormy night, and careful housewives are closing shutters and barring doors. Everybody has taken shelter, even the dog is safe within. Under a starless inky firmament the village goes to sleep.

About midnight the heavens open in a brief pelt of rain. Suddenly the wind shifts. The roof groans beneath the weight of it and every beam complains. Trees mingle their disordered tops; their thrashing branches bend and clash. Lightning stabs the earth; and thunder comes in

the same instant, ear-splitting, echoless. A solitary crash; now, only the shriek of the wind and the roar of the rain. But the building is stout and weather-tight; all the family are indoors; so, to sleep again.

But we awake with a start. What is that? The rain is over. On the gale comes a sound of menace, the tolling of the great church bell. An alarm! The bolt has set a house on fire! A man on a horse without saddle or bridle gallops by shouting 'Fire!' Look! The steeple is catching the glare. 'Fire!' 'Fire!'

From every side people are running with axes, ladders, buckets. In the main road it is light as day. The lightning has struck the Saintonges' new barn to the south of their house at the other end of the village. It was not discovered till the hay had caught and the roof was in flames; and this fierce wind is blowing towards the church! Should the Saintonge house take fire all will be over; the whole village must go. 'Fire!' 'Fire!'

The crowd is swiftly organized for at-

tack. Neither fire-brigades nor pumps nor hose are found in our country-sides—only a hearty good will to help and a quick understanding of the way to set about it. The mayor takes command. 'Up the ladders, my boys; save the house! Wet carpets and blankets for the roof and the end of the gable! Water, wherever you can throw it! A chain of buckets, look sharp! You watch the sou'west corner where it threatens to take. That's enough for the bucket-chain. You chaps there, come along to the barn with your axes.'

A double chain is formed with the women on one side and the men on the other: here, the empty buckets pass from hand to hand down to the river; there, they keep arriving, full. 'Water!' 'Water!' They come and go without a moment's halt.

A gang of men devote attention to the barn, strive to smother the fire, pull down the walls, tear away fragments of the roof. Wasted labour! The furnace is heated seven-fold and the crackling sounds like

musketry. The leaping flames, wind-driven, are licking the side of the house. The plucky fellows on the roof, at the end of the bucket-chain, have to protect themselves as best they can with wet cloths while they carry on the fight. A score of times the shingles catch, and as often they manage to stifle the blaze.

Someone cries out—'Where is the *curé!* Go and fetch Monsieur le Curé!'

But the *curé* is there, and was present among the first. Those who had not before noticed him in the stir and the excitement now see that he is standing alone between the threatened house and the burning barn.

From the roof they call down to him—'Stop the fire, Monsieur le Curé! We cannot stick here any longer; we are afire! It gains on us, Monsieur le Curé. Put out the fire! Bring about a miracle!'

'Work on, my children, and fear nothing. The house will not burn.'

They take heart again. Has not the *curé* said that the house will not burn? Is

he not there, barring the way? The fire will never go by him. 'Courage, boys! Water. More water! The house isn't going to burn, the fire won't pass! At it with a will!'

The Saintonges' furniture had been rushed out and lay higgledy-piggledy in a neighbouring field. Only one thing stays behind: the crucifix which used to hang in the best room is now fixed on the gable-wall facing the peril.

The *curé* is at his post beneath the protecting cross, now encouraging, now counselling his people. The heat scorches his face, the sparks burn holes in his cassock.

Something falls crashing within, and a blazing red wall rears itself and drives hissing on the dwelling.

'Run,' is the cry, and the hardiest have to give way before the conquering flame.

The priest has not stirred. He stands there motionless under the fiery rain, but his lips are moving.

What can this mean? They stop and gaze in astonishment, unable at first to

understand what has happened. For suddenly the smoke clears off, the flame is beaten back.

'The wind has shifted! Danger is over! The fire sinks! Hurrah! Now we shall master it. Water, over this way. We are getting it under. Hurrah! Water here, ladders, axes!'

Day is dawning. The barn is only a smoking ruin, but the house of the Saintonges is saved. Blackened with smoke and cinders, hands and faces scorched and burnt, the men still keep watch over the glowing ashes.

Says one old fellow—'It is a known fact that fire from the sky is never quenched by water from the earth. You saw yourselves that the more we gave it the more it burned. But for Monsieur le Curé all the village would have gone, certain sure!'

The church bell rings—a gentle, even, knell. Monsieur le Cure is mounting the steps of the altar.

THE SEASON-TICKET

UNCLE Jean was conducting a town gentleman to the next parish. This should have been a person of some consequence, at any rate a good son of the church, for he was set down at the *curé's* on his arrival the evening before, and in the morning, it being Sunday, he went to mass. Monsieur le Curé had requested Uncle Jean, in the capacity of acting churchwarden, to drive the stranger in his new trap after dinner to the house of one of his neighbouring brethren.

Uncle Jean knew nothing more of his companion, and he was not in the least unwilling to find out who and what manner of man he was. He promised himself that before the horse had trotted a quarter of a mile he would be a good deal the wiser.

But the traveller was not his idea of a pleasant gossip. In vain Uncle Jean chat-

ted away, hinted questions with light insinuating touch, offered the gentleman every possible chance of telling who he was, whence he came, what calling he pursued, why he was visiting parish priests in this fashion. Not a thing worth repeating could he draw forth. This strange man either vouchsafed no answers at all, or parried the interrogatories with highly unsatisfying replies—rejected, in a word, every delicate advance.

Whereat my uncle felt most justly annoyed. Moreover it stole upon him that the traveller was slyly amusing himself at the perfectly natural interest shewn in his affairs and was inclined to be disagreeably sarcastic. Can he be laughing at me?'—Uncle Jean's choler was rising.

Worse was to follow: as they jogged along, the gentleman took full leave to be critical about this and that—about the toll-bridge over the river, for example, which displeased him because it was built of wood and not of steel! In blank silence Uncle Jean pulled up his horse before the

Uncle Jean was conducting a town gentleman to the next parish.

keeper's lodge, lugged out his purse and payed his honest six cents—three for going, three for returning. Whereat his companion volunteered the comment that where he came from people were not thus delayed at toll-bridges. 'We pay a lump sum' he explained—'pay once a year, and then we are ticket-holders for the season and never have to stop. It is much more convenient.'

'Get up! Blond,' grunted Uncle Jean, laying the whip with unnecessary vigour along his horse's back.

'This chap here seems to have a notion that he can teach me!—A man who won't even tell how he earns his living! A fine thing that to make a secret about! Just as though I were ashamed—I—to let everybody know I am a habitant. These towny folk haven't the least idea how to converse rationally. Let him keep it private, if he has a mind to! As for me, I won't open my head again.' Thus he thought; but all he said was 'Get up! Blond.'

A little further on there stood by the road-side a lofty wooden cross, one of those crosses raised in pious thought by the faithful to invite a blessing on our countrysides. Women make the sign of the cross, men bare their heads as they go by.

Uncle Jean reverently lifted his hat, but, as well as he could discover out of the tail of his eye, the stranger made no gesture!

The city man, little used to travel in the country and unaware of the beautiful custom, was too much taken up with the scenery to observe the weather-worn calvary; or the idea of saluting it did not enter his mind.

'A queer business, this,' said the uncle to himself. 'Yet he hasn't the marks of a heretic; he went to mass, he dined with the *curé*,—and he doesn't uncover to the Cross! Never should I have thought it possible in a self-respecting Christian. What is one to make of these people from town! . . .'

Apparently relieved at being no longer plied with questions, the traveller was enjoying his drive—viewing the farms and

fields and woods on either hand—without an inkling of the dark perplexities he had stirred in my good uncle's spirit.

Uncle Jean was still debating the matter in his own mind:—'One should not be too quick in judging another. Maybe I was wrong. To make sure I shall watch him when we come to the cross at Beauséjour.

The cross of Beauséjour is five miles from the river, and they drive it in silence except for my uncle's occasional 'Get up! Blond!'

And here is the cross. Uncle Jean lifts his hat but turns his eye on my gentleman, who, looking unconcernedly the other way, pays no more attention to the Cross of Beauséjour than to the first one!

'Get up there! Blond.'

And so hearty a cut of the whip falls on her amazed flank that she is off like the wind and never slackens pace till they are in the village.

Not a word to his companion since crossing the bridge; but now my uncle

wheels deliberately about and looks him straight in the eye.

'Might I make so bold as to offer one trifling remark—would you be offended, sir?'

'Not a bit, my good man.'

'Well sir, no doubt you will say it is none of my business, but in the matter of these crosses by the way I think you act a little too much as though you held a season-ticket!'

WORK

To My Wife.

ONCE there lived a man and his wife who had tilled the soil all their lives and now were getting on in years.

What a deal of work old Anselme Letiec and his wife Catherine had faced together since the day when they settled in the fifth concession of the parish, the last concession of the Seigniory! After their wedding, Anselme had brought Catherine thither, almost into the woods. She was eighteen and he twenty-one. They set to it forthwith; and forty long years, in fair weather and foul, through winters and summers, rain and snow and sunshine, they had toiled unceasingly.

At the start they had to thrust the crowding forest from their door, to fell great trees, to clear the land of stumps and stones; then came the first heavy breaking

of new soil, the prolonged and stubborn battle with indocile nature; and later, on their broadening fields, the drudgery without surcease in scorching suns and cutting winds. Anselme had shaped his own domain with ax and plough-share, made it fruitful with the sweat of his brow. For nigh on half a century he had won a living from it by the strength of his good arms, and the unwavering Catherine had ever stood by his side and taken her full share. Farm and house smiled and prospered under their hands, busy from morn till night.

Misfortunes had come: the lightning burned his barn with a year's harvest; hail mowed down a crop; grasshoppers ravaged his fields; a sickness beyond cure took toll of his flock; death crossed his threshold. But no ill-happening overtried the patient goodness of these simple-hearted Christians, for prayer taught their spirits how to endure, and the very busyness of their days wrought consolation in grief.

Many children were born to them;

brightening the home in turn with laughter and play; growing up to share the daily task; one by one passing from the father's roof. The eldest had been sent to college and was now a priest. Anselme and Catherine nightly rendered thanks to God for this blessing accorded them. Two sons were dead, and sorely the parents had wept them. Thanks to an industry that never slackened, to life-long frugality, they had been able to establish the other boys on good farms, and the girls were well married.

Anselme and Catherine, now alone on the place, were getting old; and the thought came back to them—to Anselme chiefly—that once they had dreamed a dream.

And their dream was that one day they would live in independence.

It began a long time ago. Quite as a boy Anselme used to wonder how certain of the villagers never had anything to do but to smoke their pipes in the sun, chat with passers-by, offer an opinion upon the

weather or the chances of the next harvest.

'They live on their savings,' his father told him; and he had discovered later that these were retired farmers who had sold their farms and were ending their peaceful days on small incomes.

These reposeful old people, sitting on their door-steps with no care in the world but to eat and sleep, had always lingered in Anselme's mind as the picture of earth's profoundest happiness—a picture which inspired him now.

So long had he talked about it that Catherine had given up objecting; even did she appear to share his aspiration, but without the same keenness, and rather to gratify his wish than her own.

And, to record the exact truth, Anselme himself had not of late been setting great store by his youthful vision; yet, when life pressed him hardest, it was a pleasant enough thought that some time, his toils ended, the wherewithal might be scraped together to buy a little place in the village where they would round out their lives.

For many a long year some such hope had been sleeping in the back of his mind.

Now the hour was come for turning the dream into reality. Anselme had been seriously debating the matter ever since the marriage of his last daughter. He was still hearty and strong, but he felt as though a little rest would be uncommonly welcome. The sale of farm and stock would yield a sum well answering his purpose. It chanced at the moment that a cottage with a tiny garden was to let just by the church. How happy they might be there!—No round of morning and evening chores, no more beasts to care for, fields to plough, hay to cut, crops to house, wheat to thresh. Nothing but a little easy housekeeping and cooking. They could sleep on in the mornings and get up exactly when they pleased. All day long they would rock on the verandah and watch the people passing. Nothing was to hinder a little game of Queens or Four Sevens with the neighbours of an evening. So would they live, peaceful and content, awaiting God's good time . . .

For they would have never another thing to do; they would be people living on their private means!

'Suppose Catherine,' said Anselme one day 'suppose that we were to sell out?'

'As you think best,' answered Catherine, 'but . . .'

Now the word 'but' on Catherine Letiec's lips was apt to betoken a weighty reservation.

'*But* what?' asked Anselme.

She pursued her thought:— 'It was a nice idea to have in mind, old man, that the day would come when we should be able to live on our savings; but now that we really have to decide, something tells me that perhaps it will not be just as pleasant as it sounds. Do you want to know what I think? . . . Well, I am afraid we may be sorry.'

'*Afraid we may be sorry!* Aren't you joking, my old woman? What sort of a life have we led together these forty years? —up at dawn, and breathless and sweat-

ing over our work till black night. Here we are, bent and heavy of foot with everlasting tilling of the earth and carrying of loads. My hands are like horn and yours are all cracked. Forty years have we been hard at it from New Year's morning till New Year's eve; surely that ought to be enough; surely we have won the right to rest a little! And then—think of it—we shall be only half a dozen steps from the church; you will be able to go to mass every day—I could, too.'

They talked it over for a long while and in the end Catherine gave way—persuaded, or seemingly persuaded. At any rate they resolved to sell.

The notary they consulted took the matter up and declared that he could find a purchaser—even had one in mind. Old Maxime Bellefeuille was anxious to settle his son in the neighbourhood and had the requisite cash.

After enquiries made on both sides, it appeared that the land suited old Bellefeuille who would give a handsome price, but that

he did not wish to buy the rather out of date farm-gear. Furthermore, the old gentleman wanted a little more time and would take a month to think it over.

'A matter of no consequence,' declared the notary, 'you are not in a hurry, Mr. Letiec. Should Bellefeuille not come to terms I can easily find you another purchaser. Such a farm as yours is always salable at a good figure.'

'When Mr. Bellefeuille has made up his mind you will be careful, sir, to draw up the proper papers for us, securing the income to the good wife and me for our lives, and the capital to our children in the way I told you.'

'Don't be alarmed, Mr. Letiec, your papers shall be perfectly in order.'

'Everything must be straight, and no loop-holes.'

'You can rely on me.'

Before leaving, Anselme put it to the notary:—'Since old Bellefeuille doesn't want my gear, is there any reason against selling it in the meantime?'

'You may sell in the meantime,' counselled the man of the law.

And so, whilst awaiting the disposition of the land, Anselme sold. Partly by auction, partly by private sale, everything was cleared off: cattle, vehicles, implements, furniture. Anselme and Catherine kept only the few things they needed to furnish their cottage in the village.

The sale lasted all day. A notice given from the church steps on the preceding Sunday brought many bidders. In house and barn, in stable and yard, there was such a hubbub for hours that you could not hear yourself speak.

When evening came at last, and everyone had paid for his purchase and carried it off, Anselme and Catherine found themselves alone.

After supping, they counted up what the sale had brought in. No longer had they a head of cattle, nor so much as a hayfork, but a goodly pile of fifty-cent pieces and quarters lay before them on the kitchen

table. Anselme found that the reckoning was beyond all his hopes.

'Just look at that,' he said, stuffing his spectacles into the case. 'Never should I have believed the things would fetch so much. Catherine, my old woman, we are moneyed folk already! Not a thing to be done to-morrow! And in a month the land will be sold and we shall go to live in the village!'

But Catherine answered never a word. She swept together the coins, locked them in the cupboard and tidied up the table.

Anselme was delighted at this splendid beginning. He seated himself on the front steps, lit his pipe and forthwith took up his tale:—'To-morrow, not a thing to be done! Pretty hard to believe. A long day since anything like that has happened to us, my old woman. Come along and sit down and watch the sunset.'

The sun hung low over the woods, and its level rays lighted the furrowed faces and whitening hair of these two peasants who were leaving their land.

Silent a while, Catherine spoke:—'It was hard to see our old plough go.'

'It brought three dollars!'

'You ploughed the sou'west field with it for the first crop we ever sowed. You remember? The year that Jean was born.'

'A long time ago, that.'

'The share is sound yet,' she answered.

Another silence, drawn out. They were thinking of the old plough which had given service for so many years—and now was sold.

It was Catherine who spoke first:—'I am glad that France Villeneuve bought White Nose. His wife is kind to beasts. She will take good care of her.'

'White Nose is a fine cow.'

'The best in our herd . . . Maybe we should have done better to keep her . . .'

'But why?' Anselme breaks in. 'There would be the feeding, caring for, milking. You have had enough of that in your time; you are going to have a rest.'

The husband has let his pipe go out; the

wife, chin in hands, keeps her unseeing eyes on the meeting of earth and sky.

Anselme at length, half to himself:—'Neighbour Ladouceur bought Grizzle.'

'A clever mare,' murmurs Catherine.

'Age and all, there isn't a mare to touch her with a heavy load.

'Nor one able to plough a straighter furrow. She has a natural gift.'

'Perhaps we could have held on to her,' Anselme half audibly admitted.

'She fetched seventy-five dollars,' was Catherine's comment.

With a sudden movement Anselme knocks the ashes out of his pipe. 'Let's go to bed,' says he. But after the evening prayer he still wanders aimlessly about the kitchen, opens the door again, goes out on the step, stares through the gloom towards the outbuildings at this his usual hour for a last tour of inspection. He halts, irresolute; turns and enters the house, muttering to himself:—'What does it matter! We are our own masters now, and to-morrow I sleep till seven o'clock!'

And in the morning he awoke at four.

The sun's rays were striking full into the room. Anselme's first impression was that he had overslept himself, and he is about to leap out of bed when suddenly he remembers. Not a thing to be done! He can laze in bed all morning if he has a mind. The luxury of it! He decides for slumber; but finds it vain to turn over and back, to tell himself he is now a man of leisure, to say again and again that it is all quite true—not a one of his customary tasks standing undone. Sleep does not come. He closes his eyes, but the clear daylight comes redly through the lids. Wishful to think of nothing whatever, he cannot put away that picture of Ladouceur leading off Grizzle with hanging head . . . No use trying to sleep, and the attempt is boring and tiresome. So up he jumps.

'Awake already?' asks Catherine.

'What!' says Anselme, 'you awake too?'

'For quite a good while, but I thought you were going to sleep late and I didn't want to disturb you.'

'Such a fine morning that I feel like having a mouthful of fresh air.'

'You might as well; there is nothing for you to do.'

'I was just thinking that.'

Anselme went off to his barns and byres. A far-away cock was crowing and his neighbour's oxen lowed; but everything with him was untenanted and silent. Not a fowl in the yard, a cow in the pen, a horse in the stable. He heard a neighing from time to time over at Ladouceur's. Could that be Grizzle—Grizzle home-sick for her old stable?

The door of the hen-house stood open. Anselme kept gazing at the vacant coop and the bare perches for a long while, as though there was something in it all too deep for him.

No more than a glance did he cast into the cow-shed; it looked so dismal with the unoccupied stalls, the empty racks and mangers, that he lacked heart to put foot across the threshold.

The threshing-floor in the barn was lit-

tered with hay. Anselme searched in every corner, but there was neither rake nor fork to tidy up the place.

The drive-way into the barn gave a wide prospect across the fields to the distant line of woods and sky. The spring sowing was about finished and the new owner would reap the benefit. A single field was yet unploughed; but never a plough nor a harrow remained on the farm, not a scythe for the crop, not a cradle for the harvesting!

Well, what of it? Things are as they should be. People who are going to live in a village have got past the need of such tools. And, anyway, the land itself and everything on it will belong to someone else . . .

Anselme had the feeling this morning that he was seeing his fields and meadows for the first time.

He bethought himself of much that had happened in old days. Hereabouts, he had felled his first tree—a pine like a steeple for straightness and height—and the next

year had made out of it the king-posts of his barn.

Over yonder, where the land is now uncultivated, his second son Joseph had learned to plough.

Beyond that again he saw the upper pasture-field. A job to get the stones out of that! Catherine, who did a man's work, ricked her back there so badly that she had to keep her bed for a full month.

A spring of beautiful water, cold and clear, gushes out by the edge of the wood.

A fine property to be master of, and he and Catherine made it what it is. No sod of earth upon it they had not turned and turned again with their own hands. Verily they had toiled long and hard, but the soil had given recompense. What countless trusses of hay and sheaves of wheat had they not harvested and lodged in barn!

Yes, and in a month the farm would be another's . . .

It was a sad and sober Anselme who made his way back to the house.

While Catherine was putting things to

rights after breakfast a whinnying came faintly to their ears.

'I am going to stroll over Ladouceur's way,' said Anselme.

Wife looks at husband as he departs, and one who knew no better might have said that her wrinkles half hid a smile. Off with her apron, on with her hat, and she, too, takes to the high road. Can it be possible that she is bound for France Villeneuve's?

An hour later, Anselme Letiec is on the way back from his call on neighbour Ladouceur; but what in the world does this mean? In his hand a halter, at the end of the halter—Grizzle!

Entering the stable he hears his wife say 'Come up! White Nose.'

He stares. If that woman Catherine hasn't been and fetched White Nose! While he was after the mare she went after the cow!

Quite as usual, Grizzle marches in by herself and takes her place in the stall beside White Nose. She lifts her good old

head over the partition with a little whinny of joy, while White Nose chews her cud in great content. The beasts make it plain enough, each in her way, that they are glad to find one another again and to be at home.

The shame-faced couple stood gazing and tongue-tied. Catherine was the first to find her wits:

'I thought that while we were waiting to move into the village it would be nice to have a drop of milk, and I asked France to let us keep White Nose for a month . . . Milking her and looking after her will be a little distraction for me.'

'Ye-es . . . What struck me was that it wouldn't be half a bad idea to plough that nor'easterly field before we sold. Ladouceur has lent me Grizzle for a month.'

'But you haven't got a plough!'

'I should have told you about that: I-I borrowed one.'

'And when you have finished your ploughing, what will you be doing with Grizzle for a whole month?'

Anselme had no answer at the tip of his

tongue. At last he got out:—'Always odd jobs of carting; something to do will help pass the time.'

'As you think best,' Catherine said sweetly.

A peasant and his wife who are used to be at it all day make short work of ploughing a field and caring for a cow. Morning by morning, one or the other of them found an excuse for borrowing a cart, a tool, a farm implement for some purpose. The stable had to be cleaned up, a panel of the fence needed mending, the garden cried out for weeding; if it wasn't this it was the other.

But these stop-gap tasks were only a pretence without real interest for them. Anselme and Catherine drifted through idle and aimless days of vague discontent, wondering what their hands might find to do. Life was tedious as a lenten fast.

Two dull sad weeks dragged by. Anselme had never a laugh left in him, and half the time Catherine was crying quietly into her apron—these two whose vigorous old

age had been so bright and happy. Yet neither of them could pluck up courage to confess.

An evening came at last, after a day of crushing idleness that weighed them to the earth, when Anselme could endure no longer and must speak.

'I begin to doubt, Catherine, whether we-folk are made for this life of leisure. Say what you like and do what you like, we are happier working.'

Catherine heaved the deep sigh of joy which comes when one has awaited something that long has tarried. But first she must be very sure how her husband's mind is shaping, and she answers warily:—"Is it not too soon yet to know, my dear Anselme? In a fortnight the land will be sold and we shall be living in the village. Possibly things will go better then.'

'The land will be sold . . . The land will be sold . . . It is not sold yet! Certainly the land will be sold, if I am willing to sell it! Look here, Catherine; do you

want to know what I think? . . . Well, I am afraid we may be sorry.'

'The sale is not made—as you were just saying. We might hold on to the farm . . . Of course, then, we could not live on our income.'

'But we would be staying here; we would keep Grizzle . . .'

'We would keep White Nose.'

'We might buy back some of our farm-gear . . . What do you think about it all, old lady?'

'You may take it for granted that we shall be happy—we were before,' said Catherine. 'You see, old man, there seems to have been one thing we dropped out of mind—that the good God never put us upon the land with the idea that we should live on our savings.'

'We ought to talk to Monsieur le Curé before deciding anything.'

'I feel certain that he will be against our selling.'

'My notion, Catherine, is that we went into this whole affair thoughtlessly, with-

out proper consideration. Why, will you tell me, should we give up our farm? My legs are still good, and my eyes!'

'That last bee, over at the Cormiers', not one of the young folks could keep up with you.'

'Let us buy a new outfit for the farm!' broke out Anselme.

'As you think best,' answers the submissive Catherine.

And they smiled and they chuckled, happy again for the first time in a fortnight.

Anselme was at the village betimes in the morning.

'Mr. Notary,' said he, 'you need not bother any more about selling that farm of mine; I'm going to keep it.'

And by way of excusing his change of mind he added:—'It's altogether too tiring for me, this business of doing nothing.'

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

MONSIEUR le Curé was returning to his house along the high road. He had been visiting Alexis the son of Red Bastien, ill for many months and now almost despaired of by the doctor. On the way he had called here and there to say a cheering word, offer some timely advice or give a little help.

The kindly old man as he went was casting about in his mind for another morning errand of mercy, when a youngster who was playing in front of a house piped up a sudden 'Good day, Monsieur le Curé!'

'Good day to you, little Pierre,' returned the *curé*. 'Come over to my house on Sunday, and you shall have a picture if you have been a good boy all the week. You must begin to learn your catechism this year, little Pierre . . . Do you know yet how to make the sign of the cross?'

'Yes, Monsieur le Curé.'

'Do it for me then so that I may see.'

And the little Pierre very solemnly repeated *'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen!'*

But the cross shaped by the small hand on the small body was immoderately large. With *'In the name of the Father'* it began clear over the top of his head about the nape of his neck; *'and of the Son'* carried it to his knees; *'and of the Holy Ghost'* sent the little paw to either side of his wee shoulders.

The *curé* could not help smiling.

'You are laughing at something, Monsieur le Curé?' asked Jean, the boy's father, who had just stepped out of the door.

'I *was* smiling, Jean,—smiling because I am pleased with little Pierre. He knows how to cross himself . . . the cross he makes is perhaps a trifle on the large side . . .'

'Don't discourage the boy, Monsieur le Curé says Jean. 'You ought to know that the sign of the cross always shrinks enough with age!'

THE CAPTAIN

AN old sailor was master of an old schooner.

Long had they sailed the sea together; now from cape to cape in coasting voyages; now in the broad Gulf beyond sight of land; in calm and storm; close-hauled or running free; through all weathers and under every trim of canvas.

The captain himself had built her, and no one but he ever handled the tiller. His tight-shut fist always held a tiny figure of the Virgin when he steered, a well-worn figure that never left him.

The schooner had found safe passage through many a shoal, stood up to many a tempest, outlived many a squall. With loving care the mariner had kept her shipshape and seaworthy. From kelson to truck, from stem to stern, she was sound; —the age of her timbers, the strain of her

tackle, the patching of her sails, notwithstanding.

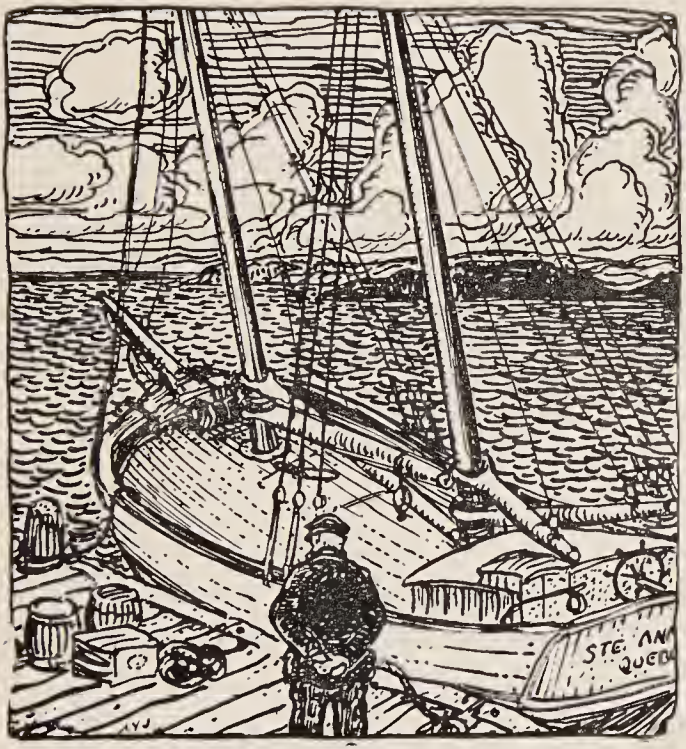
But the skipper himself, broken with years, was no longer able to pursue his hard calling and lived with his daughter in the village. The schooner lay moored at the crumbling wharf that juts out into the St. Lawrence behind the church.

As sure as the good God sent a new day the old fellow would go down to see her. He tested the ropes, made sure that the moorings were fast, the stays taut, the sails properly stowed, her tackle in order. Satisfied on all points, he would seat himself forward and silently smoke his pipe.

The sailor was home from the sea; but he was yet the master of a ship, and, fair or foul, he was there to protect her,—to protect her and attend to her wants.

But the evil day dawned when the schooner had to go towards the upkeep of the house. He stood out against it, but at last comprehended and gave way.

The schooner was sold, and the captain himself must needs deliver his vessel to



The old fellow would go down to see her.

the new owner. He went over every inch of her; his shrunken hand touched shakily each rope, lingered fondly on the tiller. At length he stood on the wharf and watched her making ready for departure.

The Marie-Jeanne cast off and stood out with bellying canvas, but when her old master saw his boat heeling to the wind and sailing away the tears coursed down his weather-beaten cheeks.

'You must not take it so hard, father. She was no use to you any more, and she brought you a good price.'

'I know, I know all that,' mourned the ancient skipper. 'That is not what hurts me. But . . . but . . . I'm *afraid he mayn't be kind to her!*'

Ten years bowed the captain at a stroke, and soon after the old man died.

RED OR WHITE?

To My Sister.

DO you remember the garden with its nodding flowers, and the white-washed house where our people used to live? . . . Full well I know it all comes back to you:—our honest grandfather's furrowed brow and the loving-kindness shining in grandmother's eyes;—the ancient walnut-tree whose fruitful autumn branches swept the earth on every side, shutting us into a green world, above, around;—the plums that rained upon our heads when grandfather, with bent figure and smiling face, shook the knotty trunks;—the great ruddy oxen in the paddock hard by;—the river beyond the willows at the meadow's end;—the well, and its tall sweep against the sky;—blossoms and birds and butterflies . . . The unresting foot of time has trodden all. The old folk have departed at the lofty summons none

disobeys; the mighty walnut fell stricken to earth by lightning; the flowers are faded and gone and the birds have winged away; the very butterflies seem to be no more . . .

Have you forgotten a poor wee plant that pushed above the soil among the flaunting blossoms at the garden's far end? The stalwart carnations looked down upon it in contempt.

You remember we found the puny thing was a rose-bush, and lavished every care on this new comer—so frail and little that an unkind blast would have uprooted it. But the wind was merciful.

For a while beneath your mothering eye it strove to grow, clinging to life with a desperate grasp, putting forth a few leaves that withered in the opening, groping in the earth with little despairing feet. Surely never had so weak a stem such high courage to survive!

About on every side swayed and danced the flowers, brilliant of colour, sweet with perfume. It alone, sickly and pitiful, had neither scent nor blossom,—yet struggling,

struggling bravely without cease; and stealing, now a drop of dew, now a ray of sunshine from the leaves above. But fate had doomed it. Asking only leave to exist, this was denied, and death's hand slowly closed upon the slender life. The lowly head bowed itself, the sapless stalk shrivelled.

The little rose-bush striving in loneliness among the rioting bloom perished without putting forth a bud or throwing a waft of perfume on the air. Red, would the flowers have been?—or white? It never wore its colours, and all it left for memory is a dead rose-bush's tiny skeleton.

NO MORE OF OUR DAY

OLD Anselme is dead.

Word goes swiftly through the parish: 'Father Anselme is laid out on his bier.' And from all about they flock silently thither to pay him a last visit.

The room is draped with black, and full in the centre of it he lies, apparelled as for holiday in Sunday garb. But the tall figure does not rise according to its wont to give the visitors greeting; in state the old man's mighty frame attends their coming. His hands do not open for the hospitable clasp; they are crossed forever in the attitude of his final supplication. The well known smile no more illumines those rugged features in which eternal peace abides.

The aged habitant is dead: his reckoning is no longer with Time.

It was in the falling dusk that his tired

eyes closed, and now comes the familiar dawning.

For three-quarters of a century, and from year's end to year's end, the ploughman rose with the breaking day; but the fields are flooded with light, the sun is up, and those vigilant eyes are shut.

—'Anselme, my old early-bird! What do you here, lying so late? Wake up! It is time, for the cocks have crowed and the sun is high. Your tasks are summoning, Anselme. Wake up!'

The tranquil sleeper stirs not. Alas the day! The brightness of our dawns cannot pierce the shades that envelop him.

The hours pass, and evening draws on.

These sixty years, no one but he has housed the cattle and made all fast for the night.

'Anselme! Anselme! The sun is down and the light is failing; soon it will be black dark. Why are you not making your rounds? The cows are lowing towards the byre, the door of the barn stands open. Go and put things to rights; and

The ploughman who heeded not the sunrise neither sees the shadows lengthen.

then come and sit on the door-step as you always do and watch with an easy mind the last glow fade.'

But the ploughman who heeded not the sunrise neither sees the shadows lengthen. Praised be God!—In that Anselme has gone where the clear shining knows no twilights—where the mornings and the evenings of his earthly life merge in a timeless noon . . .

The old Anselme is no longer of our day.

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